STRONGER, FASTER, BETTER

Men's Health

FLIP THIS ISSUE!
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BIG BREAKOUT ENERGY

How JOHN BOYEGA Muscled Past Star Wars

THE CLIMATE BRO'S GUIDE TO FIGHTING ECO-ANXIETY

7 EXPLOSIVE MOVES for Total-Body Strength

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"Ambition is my battery power."
—JOHN BOYEGA, P. 58

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FEATURES

58 SHOW OF FORCE
With three major new projects and his own innovative production company, actor and activist John Boyega is muscling past *Star Wars*.
BY LOLA OGUNNAIKE

66 8 REASONS TO ESCAPE
Sweat, think, relax, and recharge at these 15 travel destinations, all designed for one outcome: a healthier, happier you.
BY RINA RAPHAEL

74 SALADS, EXCEPT ACTUALLY AWESOME!
We're in a leafy revolution, bursting with flavor, texture, and freshness. These four recipes, created by the country's best chefs, will change the way you eat your greens.
BY TODD KLIMAN

78 THE RISING
Indigenous people have borne the brunt of this country's many mental and physical health crises for centuries. These Native changemakers are finding ways for their communities—and for all of us—to build stronger bodies and minds.
BY SHEA VASSAR

86 PROFITS AND LOSSES
My wife is sick. The system missed it. Now we must pay. A lot of money. Too much. This is the Age of Shitty Health Insurance. My story is your story.
BY NICK FULLER GOOGINS

PHOTOGRAPH BY **DANNY KASIRYE**



5 FOR $50!
Save money and prep these five fast, high-protein meals now. (See page 40.)

PLUS! YOUR FALL STYLE GUIDE
The best shoes, shirts, and pants to feel fast and light this fall. With Formula 1 driver Daniel Ricciardo. ***Flip this issue over!***

LIFE

33 School is back! Take advantage of the online-learning boom to boost your skills.

36 Best Foods for Men: Your guide to shopping healthy even when food prices are *!!!!*

40 Five protein-packed muscle meals that take just one hour to prep—and last all week.

42 All the stuff you need to make your backyard patio this summer's party destination.

44 What's on tonight? 300 hour-long episodes, that's what. How to find Zen in the age of too much TV.

46 The tech that dentists recommend for a whiter, straighter, (almost) movie-star smile.

48 Cool Dad: Author Oliver Jeffers loved picking his toddler's outfits. Until his son discovered soccer.

MH WORLD

7 The musicians you want as your gym partner, how to train while sick, and what you thought of the new *Top Gun* star's workout.

BODY

11 After CrossFit left his body broken, Marcus Filly went back to the gym. His gentler approach to training is sparking a fitness evolution.

14 Change up the Bulgarian squat and pack on glute muscle.

16 6 A.M.: Country star Zac Brown takes his gym on the road…inside a tractor trailer.

22 Forge full-body explosiveness with just seven moves—and one kettlebell.

24 Are curcumin supplements really the root cure for all your inflammation?

26 How F1 driver Daniel Ricciardo builds neck strength to withstand high-speed g-forces.

28 Sperm quality is declining for everyone. So why are Black men disproportionately affected?

30 Transfor-nation!: An Air Force veteran's battle plan for preventing another heart attack.

MIND

51 One man. Two months. Five different therapists. Is there such a thing as too much help?

54 Enough of the "mid-life crisis." Harness what you've learned and make life's second half even better.

55 How Surgeon General Vivek H. Murthy, M.D., stays calm, organized, and grounded.

56 Reimagine how you think about climate change and soothe eco-anxiety.

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Personnel Question:
What's the last thing you binge-watched?

"*The Boys*. Carnage and man-on-mollusk sex remind you that maybe you don't live in the worst timeline after all."

"*Yellowstone*! I knocked back the entire show faster than Beth knocks back whiskey."

"YT videos of people testing fountain pens and a crazy anime called *Attack on Titan*. I have range."

"*Better Call Saul*, *Stranger Things*, and *The Kids in the Hall*. It's all a blur now."

"*Demon Slayer*. Once I got past the first episode, which is so *dark*, I was hooked."

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MH WORLD

BEHIND THE SCENES WITH THE EXPERTS, ADVISORS, AND READERS WHO BRING ***MEN'S HEALTH*** TO LIFE, AND THEN SOME.

Rock with You

Snoop Dogg
@_Davis_Mike

Tim McGraw. That guy is so f'ing FIT it's crazy 😎
@SingForMeGina

Lady Gaga in a heartbeat.
@J_B_Rasmussen

On page 16, we get an early-morning workout sesh in with country superstar Zac Brown. Which got us thinking—

WHO'S A MUSICIAN YOU'D WANT TO HIT THE GYM WITH?

@henryrollins all day
@Scoobysnacks121

Bob Weir. Fitness isn't just about physical prowess. The man is truly inspirational; he knows how to keep the balance.
@Jjm155Matt

Hootie & the Blowfish and/or **Alanis Morissette**
@360dewan

Tool drummer **Danny Carey**… still rocks
@Grendel831

Marina Pokupcic/Alamy Stock Photo



ASK THE E.I.C.

At what point do I WORK THROUGH AN INJURY VERSUS TAKE TIME OFF? I can't afford to go to the doctor for every ache and pain, but I'm in my 40s and don't want to seriously injure myself.

—Chris Rogers

ONE OF THE first people you're gonna meet in this issue is an athlete and coach named Marcus Filly. You probably know a few guys who say they love CrossFit, but I doubt you've met anyone who loved CrossFit the way Filly loved CrossFit. Three-a-day workouts. Competing in the Games. WODs for days, EMOMs for weeks—*for years*. But as contributing writer Andrew Heffernan, C.S.C.S., describes on page 11, "All those reps of power cleans, pullups, and burpees left him battling constant soreness in his shoulders, hips, and 'places I'd never dealt with in the past.' " Filly is now building a massive fitness following for what we call his "kinder, gentler" approach to CrossFit-style training, which prioritizes recovery and moderation, and there are lessons for all of us in how he listened to his body (and his mind) before hitting his reset button.

Part of Filly's struggle was obviously physical—your body can only take so much, and the no-pain-no-gain mentality that dominates so many modalities today drives too many of us to ignore all those blinking red lights in our muscles and joints that tell us *something isn't right*. But a big part of it is also mental: When you begin associating your favorite exercises with pain and misery, you're gonna start avoiding the ones that used to get you so hyped. Next stop: burnout, *blah*-ness, *nah*-ness.

To answer your question: Don't go to the doctor for every ache and pain. But stop pretending those aches and pains aren't trying to tell you something. "Working on through versus taking time off aren't your only choices," says *MH* health director Marty Munson. "There's also doing something differently, which is probably what your body is asking for when it's complaining about how you're doing things now." Lighten your weight load and try increasing your reps. Take a detour to your rower or your yoga mat. Focus on stability and balance movements instead of strength.

And if the aches are still there after you've taken a break and/or tried something different? "Grade your pain—and be honest!" says *MH* fitness director Eb Samuel, C.S.C.S. "Anything from one to three, don't be afraid to work through. Anything above that, don't push." And then what? "If there is sharp, shooting pain with swelling, I would consult a physician," says Bespoke Treatment's Dan Giordano, D.P.T., C.S.C.S., a member of the *MH* advisory board.

That's what I did earlier this year when my shoulder and hip joints started flaring up and ordinary DOMS became debilitating, days-long muscle pain. I knew *something wasn't right,* and it turns out I had systemic inflammation brought on by undiagnosed Lyme disease. I got treatment and took a break from the gym to focus on getting better, and I quickly lost a whole bunch of muscle mass that I'd busted my ass to put on, and the whole thing has epically, titanically sucked.

But I *am* getting better, thanks to the wonders of modern pharmaceuticals and my decision to see a doctor instead of swallowing the pain. And just a few days ago, for the first time in about two months, I hit the gym and eased back into weight training. And you know what? No shoulder pain. No hip soreness. Ordinary DOMS. It felt *really* good, and I can't wait to get back to it.



Richard Dorment, Editor-in-Chief

ASK AN EXPERT

Q. Can I work out when I'm sick?

A. You can, but you probably shouldn't. Typically, we distinguish between "above the neck" sickness—including sinus infections, colds, runny noses, and stuffy eyes—and "below the neck," like chest congestion and hacking cough. "Above the neck" means you're okay doing moderate aerobic and strength-training exercises. (This is also the recommendation for general fatigue.) You should *not* be doing HIIT. "Below the neck" means you should only be doing light activity, like a walk or an easy bike ride. Major red flags for exercise include irregular heartbeat and shortness of breath. Do not do anything when you feel these; see a doctor immediately. Working out is always a stress to the system—that's how we adapt and get stronger. If your system is already under stress, working out will not help you feel better. Taking a day off from training when you're sick, however, is never going to hurt your body or your long-term progress.

—MARK PETERSON, PH.D., C.S.C.S.*D, AN *MH* EXERCISE-SCIENCE ADVISOR

Have a question for Rich? Tweet us at @MensHealthMag with the hashtag #AskMHRich and ask away.

Allie Holloway

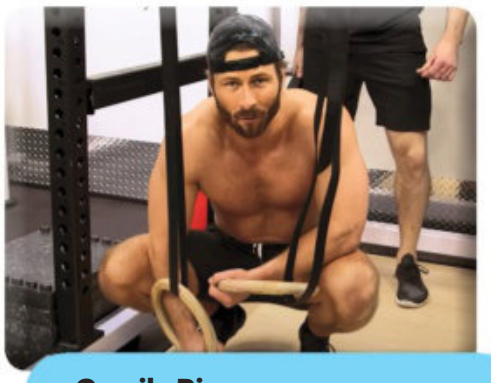
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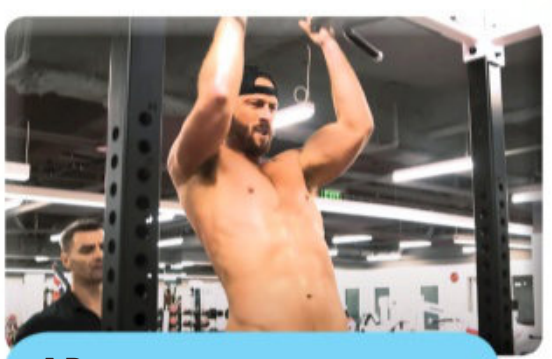
Glen Powell, one of our July/August *Top Gun: Maverick* cover guys, knows what it takes to fly a fighter jet and keep pace with a Hollywood legend: Tom Cruise. Viewers applauded his fitness moves and chill vibe in *MH*'s "Train Like" video:



Camilo Rios
This is by far the best "Train Like" video you have. Glen Powell and his PT clearly know their stuff. No fancy machines, no dumb movements, just a smart superset with amazing compounded exercises and a lot of tears…loved it!

hwahid8
I remember first seeing him in *Expendables 3;* he was definitely my favorite of the new team members.

Jack Leung
Even the supporting characters work that hard. I love this movie.



A P
"Dust off some abs that have been hiding from you for most of Covid and quarantine." 😂😂 So true it hurts. Best line of the video lol.

Steven Lennie
I'm very jealous of his hair.

Courtesy subject (Shanks). Everett Collection (*Wedding Crashers, About Last Night, Silver Linings Playbook*). Ed Araquel/Netflix (*Always Be My Maybe*).



MVP MEMBER OF THE MONTH

PAUL SHANKS II

STATS

AGE: 45

LOCATION: Corinth, MS

OCCUPATION: Health-care consultant

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IN MY GYM BAG
Jump rope, sauna hoodie (Title Boxing), sauna shirt, and Hubba Bubba original.

WHAT MAKES ME FEEL STRONG
When my body wants to quit and my mind pushes me through.

THE ONE FOOD I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT
T-bone steak (grilled).

THE BEST PIECE OF ADVICE
"Your word is all you have." —my granny

MY DREAM WORK-OUT PARTNER
Dwayne "the Rock" Johnson. His work ethic and positive demeanor create success through adversity.

MY FITNESS/ NUTRITION GOAL THIS YEAR
Drop 100 pounds by walking and running six miles every day and weight training every other.

MY ROLE MODEL RIGHT NOW
My mom. She's a hardworking, selfless humanitarian who supported me through setbacks and achievements.

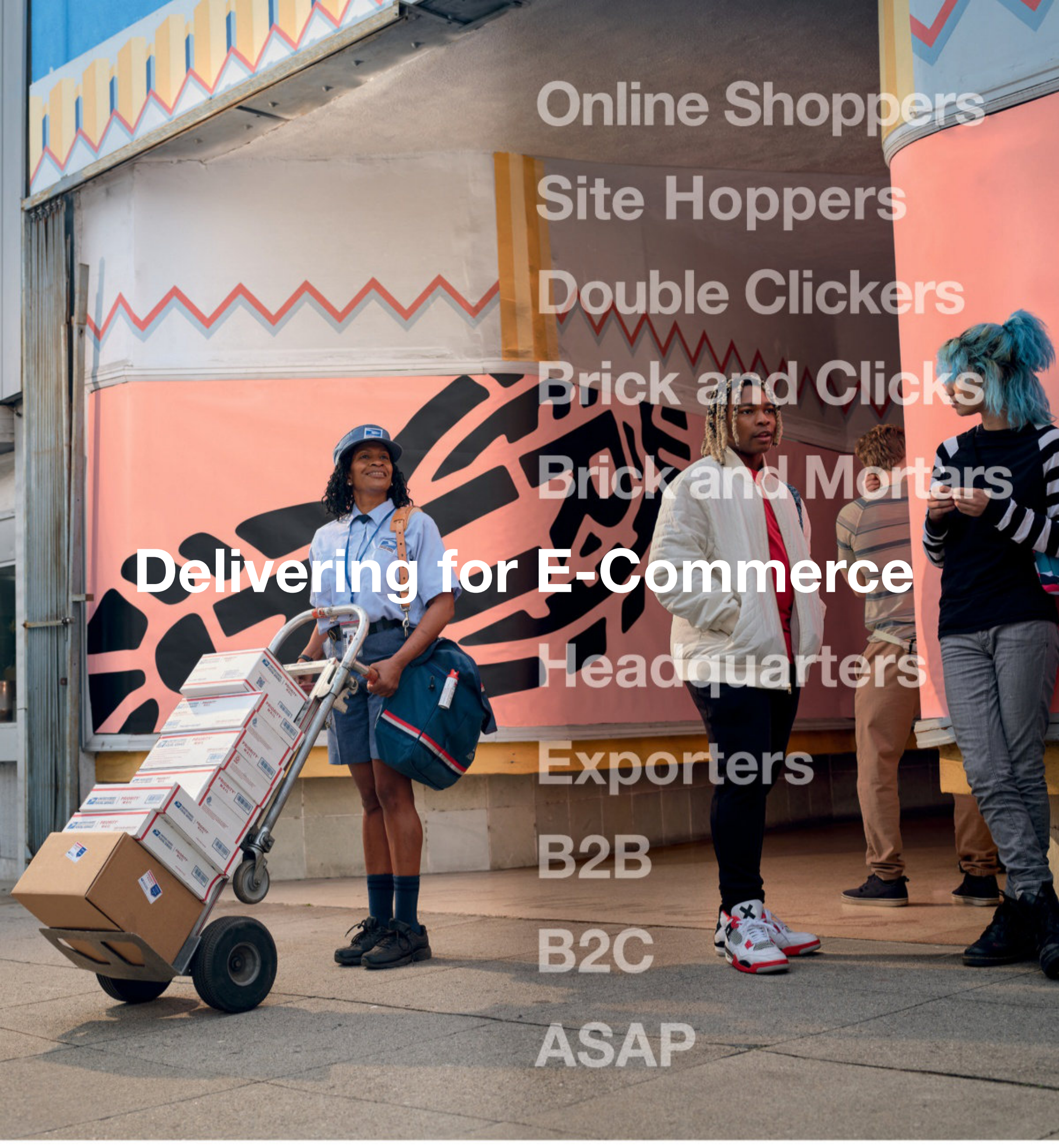
THE *MEN'S HEALTH* TWITTER POLL

BILLY EICHNER'S ROMANTIC COMEDY ***BROS*** HITS THEATERS THIS MONTH. WHICH OF THESE BELOVED

ROM-COMS IS YOUR FAVORITE?

Based on 402 responses to @MensHealthMag.





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MH BODY

VITALITY STARTS HERE ▸

LESS PAIN MORE GAIN



How CrossFit veteran **MARCUS FILLY**'s kinder, gentler take on HIIT can help you build major muscle and strength—without crushing your body.

BY ANDREW HEFFERNAN, C.S.C.S.

MARCUS FILLY DOESN'T WANT you pounding out rounds of EMOM thrusters until your shoulders can barely move, and he doesn't want you going so hard during Murph that you're a quivering mess when you finally finish. Yes, the former CrossFit Games contender (that's him above) knows pile-driving past fatigue is a CrossFit staple, and he understands why you think the secret to building muscle and

PHOTOGRAPHS BY **BALAZS GARDI**

strength is always to just work harder. But the veteran coach has other ideas.

Sure, you have to push your limits in your training. But CrossFit—and, more broadly, the fitness dogma of no pain, no gain—has long pushed you well past exhaustion, often leaving you to peel yourself off the ground after every workout. And Filly has seen what that leads to: It may blast calories and help you build muscle in the short term, but it can lead to diminishing results over the long haul. It usually causes burnout. From running to bodybuilding, too much of the fitness industry pushes you to chase fatigue above all else. "Blow through all your mental, emotional, and physical resources in your workouts and you're not going to have the same capacity for your job, wife, husband, or other interests," says Filly, a California-based coach. You're seeking better health, but you're actually robbing yourself of it, he says.

The solution is what Filly calls Functional Bodybuilding, and it's a kinder, gentler version of classic HIIT that still helps you build muscle—but doesn't leave you feeling (and fearing) every moment of every workout. It's an approach that's gaining attention: Filly has nearly 860,000 Instagram followers, and his Persist workout program has about 10,000 subscribers. He even has an exercise, the Filly press, named after him. (You're going to learn it, too.)

The protocol itself is born of Filly's own experience. Six years ago, he was one of CrossFit's strongest, in part because of a regimen of three-a-day workouts. Yes, three a day! Each session was exactly what you'd expect: Filly took on WOD after WOD, lifting heavy and scoring many reps as he carved six-pack abs and forged elite strength, building to a 550-pound deadlift.

The approach earned results, propelling Filly to a 12th-place finish at the 2016 CrossFit Games. The downside: His mind and body were wrecked. Days after the Games, he struggled to find a reason to go to the gym. Even worse, all those reps of power cleans, pullups, and burpees left him battling constant soreness in his shoulders, hips, and "places I'd never dealt with in the past." "I was toast," he says. "I went from feeling like the fittest to the least fit person in the room."

Filly wound up quitting the gym entirely for two full months (an eternity for today's no-days-off runner or strength-training fiend), but his mind was never far from fitness. Done with CrossFit, Filly, who'd majored in molecular and cell biology at UC Berkeley and started med school before turning to the program, rethought his entire training plan, searching for ways to build strength without wearing down his body with heavy weights and huge reps.

When he returned to the gym, he'd built his own workout style, one that maintains a strong focus on form during EMOM and AMRAP challenges, increases recovery time, and lets you work with lighter weights. And the three key tenets of his style can be applied to any workout you do—CrossFit or not:



The one-and-a-quarter goblet squat can smoke your quads without requiring you to lift your heaviest.

RULE 1:
TECHNIQUE OVER TONNAGE (AND TONS OF REPS)

Filly knows all about the classic CrossFit pullup stereotype, the athlete's entire body flailing in midair as they rip through reps. He understands it, too. "In competition," he says, "you're trying to do the minimum that you can get away with. That means performing each rep in a way that just barely clears the bar for the acceptable standard."

There's a good chance you've done this in your own workouts, too, rushing through extra reps of biceps curls or pushups. Those rushed reps with shaky form invite injury.

Filly's programs use two tricks to break that habit. The first: strict tempo. During the lowering portion of any exercise, count to 3 seconds. Pause for 1 second at the bottom of an exercise. Then aim to lift quickly. This tempo keeps each exercise focused on the muscles you're training, sparing your joints pain and injury.

The second: focus on form. One way to do this is by integrating one and a quarter reps, which can be used during most strength-based exercises. Filly does it often in the cyclist squat. You'll set up in goblet-squat position, your heels on a weight plate, then bend at the knees and hips, lowering slowly into a squat (for 3 seconds). Instead of standing back up, you'll go one fourth of the way up, lower back down, then stand up. Try it for 3 sets of 8 to 10 reps.



Yes, Filly wants you to do cardio. He keeps it fun, though, by relying on intervals three times a week.

RULE 2:

GET OFF-BALANCE

When you follow Filly's first rule, you'll inevitably have to use lighter weights than usual. That doesn't mean you won't challenge every muscle. He ensures that your entire body gets a workout by using offset-load moves, which have you lifting weight with one arm or leg at a time.

And no, that's not as easy as it sounds, because offset-load moves require your abs and glutes to kick into overdrive to stabilize your body. Don't believe him? Think back to your last time lifting a heavy suitcase into the overhead bin before a flight. Harder than a lateral raise, right? Filly knows why. "That's a one-arm lift with a twist and a slight lunge," he says. "All one-sided moves."

Offset-load moves can challenge your whole body even more if you hold weights in both hands while performing reps on only one side. That's the idea behind the Filly press, a shoulder-press variation named for the coach. To do it, stand holding a kettlebell in your left hand at your shoulder. Hold a dumbbell at your shoulder in your right hand. Keeping the kettlebell close to your chest, press the dumbbell overhead, then lower. Do 3 sets of 8 to 10 reps per side. And expect it to be harder than you think: The midback muscles on your left side work overtime to keep the kettlebell stable.



The Filly press challenges your abs, hips, and back muscles in addition to your shoulders.

RULE 3:

BE AN ALL-AROUND STAR

Yes, it's tempting to fixate on packing on muscle or getting an exercise (think deadlift or bench press) superstrong or dominating every morning run. After all, most athletes focus on specific traits (endurance, speed, strength). Filly knows it, too. "That was true of me in my competitive days," he says. "The marketing message we hear is that if you reach an elite level of fitness, you'll naturally look and feel healthier. But that's completely inaccurate."

Truth is, overfocusing on a few gym ideas can be antithetical to your health. You may want to build a massive chest, but if you never hone your flexibility or cardio, you'll struggle to haul a bag of groceries several blocks home or to reach the top shelf at the grocery store pain-free.

Filly's fix is a hybrid workout three days a week: Spend 10 minutes stretching, 10 minutes building strength with exercises like dumbbell rows, 10 minutes on muscle exercises like the Filly press—and 10 to 20 minutes of (yes) cardio. That cardio shouldn't be a mindless run or walk. Filly suggests this circuit, which can be done on a rower, ski erg, or bike (or by running):

Go 500 meters, then rest 45 seconds.
Go 350 meters, then rest 45 seconds.
Go 200 meters, then rest 45 seconds.
Repeat for 3 rounds.

Expect to finish in about 15 minutes—but don't expect to feel crushed. Marcus Filly doesn't want to kill you, remember. He wants you leaving this workout feeling your best. ■

MUSCLE UP YOUR GLUTES

STRONG, POWERFUL glutes serve as your athletic engine, propelling you forward on every stride of your morning run and protecting your back whenever you pick up a heavy box or bag (or kid!). But that's not all your butt can do: It's responsible for helping you balance by keeping your hips stable, and you'll test that stability with this move, the pass-through Bulgarian split squat. Your glutes bear the brunt of the challenge, but your quads, hamstrings, and abs must also work overtime to prevent your torso from shifting. Survive three sets and you'll have renewed bounce (and balance!) in every step.

—EBENEZER SAMUEL, C.S.C.S.



BEGIN HERE

1 GET A LEG UP
Hold a kettlebell in your right hand at your chest. Get in a half-kneeling stance, right knee on the floor, right instep on a box or bench behind you. Make sure your left shin is perpendicular to the floor. Tighten your abs and stand up. This is your starting position.



2 TAKE A KNEE
Bend at both knees, lowering your torso until your left thigh is parallel to the floor. Your right knee should be about an inch off the floor, and you may feel a stretch in your right hip flexor and quad.



3 PASS IT ON
Tighten your abs and shoulder blades, then lower the kettlebell, relaxing your right hand. Pass the bell under your left thigh to your left hand. Keep your hips and shoulders square to the front as you do this.



4 CLEAN UP NICE
Push your butt back slightly, then explosively contract your glute and thrust your hips forward, powering the bell to your left shoulder. Pause, then straighten your left leg. Repeat the process, this time passing the bell from left to right. That's 1 rep; do 4 to 6. Do 3 sets per leg.

TANK AND SHORTS BY **UNDER ARMOUR;**
SHOES BY **NIKE.**

MH STRENGTH IN DIVERSITY INITIATIVE

WHO'S THIS GUY?
JUSTIN INMAN is a Baltimore-based trainer and a member of the *Men's Health* Strength in Diversity Initiative, which helps trainers from marginalized communities jump-start their careers with education, mentorship, and visibility. Follow him on Instagram (@dr.baltimore).

PHOTOGRAPHS BY **PHILIP FRIEDMAN**

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6 A.M. WITH...

THE COUNTRY MUSIC TITAN

To help himself get into the best shape of his life, musician **ZAC BROWN** built a rolling gym. Now he can train daily even while on tour.

BY BRANDEN PETERS

ZAC BROWN IS WORKING UP a sweat on this sunny Georgia morning. He's bobbing up and down, powering along on an Arc Trainer, wrapping up an hour of cardio. It's one of his favorite machines because it's easy on his surgically repaired spine and "gets everything warmed up."

During this day off from the Zac Brown Band's Out in the Middle tour, the 44-year-old will be working his upper body, specifically his chest, triceps, and abs, for another hour. Brown and his band travel with a full gym—a rolling Iron Paradise equipped with machines, free weights, and even a sauna—tucked inside a tractor trailer. As he bangs through two sets of pec flies—starting with 40-pound dumbbells for 15 reps before switching to 20s for another 15—Brown looks more like a running back than the Grammy Award winner known for feel-good sing-alongs like "Chicken Fried," "Knee Deep," and "Homegrown." He moves to the cable system for three additional sets of pec flies before starting to work on his core.

"One thing I noticed, just bouncing down the road on a bus for days and days in a row, you get hunched over," says Brown. "I had L5 issues, a bulging disc, and I couldn't move my leg. I had to have a surgery last year to take some of the trash out." Now the singer emphasizes core moves to help stabilize his spine. Today he rotates through planks, crunches, and decline crunches with minimal rest between sets, the whole time working up a good lather. "It's hard work, man," he says. "You get what you give, whatever you put into it. As time goes on, the more and more momentum you get doing it, and you want to feel good."

Now on his ninth North American tour, Brown has come a long way from his early

PHOTOGRAPHS BY **ANDREW HETHERINGTON**



ROAD WORK

RE-CREATE ZAC BROWN'S UPPER-BODY WORKOUT WITH A COUPLE OF DUMBBELLS.

1. DUMBBELL DEADLIFT
Four sets of 12

2. HAMMER CURL
Four sets of 15

3. DUMBBELL LUNGE
Three sets of 12

4. TRICEPS EXTENSION
Three sets of 15

5. LATERAL RAISE
Three sets of 20





▲ **The Zac Brown Band's gym fills a trailer and includes free weights, an Airdyne, and a sauna!**

days, when he and his drummer toured out of a truck for a decade before they had their first radio hit in 1998. Asked if he had a workout regimen back then, he says, "Yeah, we'd drink a bottle of Jäger before the show, during the show, and after the show."

Brown credits a rock legend with guiding him toward fitness: "When I met Springsteen, I said, 'Tell me something that's helped you to stay feeling good.' He was like, 'Man, you need to sweat for an hour a day. I don't care what you do, doesn't matter. You need to sweat for an hour a day.' I was like, 'You're the Boss. Let's do it.' "

Whether on tour or at home in Fayetteville, outside Atlanta, with his five children, Brown lifts at least five days a week in addition to doing an hour of cardio, paddleboarding, or hiking. His fitness goal this year is to get into the best shape of his life. He's always been a little on the heavy side and wants to finally get lean. "I don't want to lose mass, but I just want to get my body-fat percentage down and be able to push myself so when I'm out doing the activities I love to do, I can do them better."

Along with helping Brown sing and play the guitar better, exercise helps him mentally. "If I go four or five days without working out, everything just seems to be a little darker than it should be. Your perception of things is really all that you have. I can tell some days when I wake up if I'm a little off. Those are the days I need to push myself to go and do it," he says. "You don't want to, but that's what pulls you out of that funk, getting to sweat."

Brown is in it for the long haul. "I want to be running up and down mountains when I'm 70 years old. I don't want to be alcoholic, red-faced, hunched over, can't move. You start falling apart when you don't take care of it," he says. "Whatever makes me feel the best so I can be the best for my kids and my people, that's the goal for me. As I get older, the more I want to be able to get out and adventure, dive deeper, go out into the woods. That's a huge motivator for me. I want to be a ripped old dude." ■

BETWEEN SETS

FANTASY WORKOUT BUDDY
"The Rock. He's an inspiration and a beast."

WORKOUT PLAYLIST
"I love all kinds of music: classic rock, '70s rock, EDM. I'll listen to Frank Sinatra, then heavy metal, then Out-Kast, CeeLo, whatever I'm feeling that day."

FRENEMY WARMUP
"Ten minutes on the Airdyne. Ride for 50 seconds, sprint 10 seconds. Repeat nine times."

GO-TO MIND-BODY WORKOUT
"Paddleboarding is good for your core and helps get rid of that mental chatter, too. You're on the water and all the noise leaves, and you just kind of get to be Zen."

FAVORITE EXERCISE
"Spearfishing: You hold your breath, dive down, and hunt fish. The ocean's so random, there's no telling what you're going to see. Pushing myself in that way, being underwater, swimming, that's my happy place."

THE 30-MINUTE TOTAL-BODY POWER-UP

Build explosiveness with this seven-move kettlebell workout, which blasts fat, increases strength, and readies you for everything from hoops games to trips to the hardware store.

BY ERIC McMAHON, C.S.C.S.*D

DIRECTIONS: Do this workout 3 times a week, resting at least 1 day between sessions. On all other days, go for a 20-minute jog or walk.



WARMUP

1 SINGLE-ARM FARMER'S CARRY

▶ Hold a kettlebell at your side. Tighten your abs so that your hips and shoulders remain level. Walk forward without leaning toward the side holding the kettlebell. Walk for 30 seconds per side, then rest 30 seconds.



2 BEAR CRAWL

▲ Get on all fours, hands directly below shoulders, knees below hips, back flat. Raise knees off the floor. This is the start. Now walk forward, moving right hand and left foot at the same time and vice versa. Take 3 steps forward, then 3 steps back; do this for 30 seconds, then rest 30 seconds.

WORKOUT

1 SINGLE-ARM THRUSTER

▼ Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart; a kettlebell held in your right hand at your chest; abs, glutes, and shoulder blades tight. Push your butt back and lower into a squat, then explosively stand while squeezing your glutes. As you do this, straighten your right arm overhead. Lower the weight to your chest. That's 1 rep; do 10 per side. Do 3 sets.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY TYLER JOE

► **FEATURED TRAINER: ERIC McMAHON, C.S.C.S.*D, R.S.C.C.*D,** is the coaching and sport-science program manager for the NSCA and a former training coach with the Milwaukee Brewers and Texas Rangers.

PICTURED HERE: MAT FORZAGLIA, C.F.S.C., is a Manhattan-based trainer and the creator of 20-Minute Muscle, a full workout program available with a *Men's Health* MVP Premium subscription.



2

SINGLE-LEG GLUTE BRIDGE

◄ Lie on your back, abs tight, feet close to your butt. Lift your left foot from the floor without raising your hips. This is the start. Drive through your right heel and squeeze your glutes, raising your hips off the floor. Pause; return to the floor. That's 1 rep; do 15 per side. Do 3 sets.

3

LUNGE-STANCE KETTLEBELL HALO

▼ Stand holding a kettlebell at your chest. Step back with your right leg, then bend at the knees and hips, lowering into a reverse lunge, right knee off the floor. Tighten your abs. This is the start. Rotate the weight clockwise in a tight circle around your head. Try to keep your legs still and your ribs from flaring. Do 5 reps. Do 5 reps counterclockwise. Do 3 sets per leg.





4

SINGLE-ARM BENT-OVER ROW

▲ Start standing, holding a kettlebell in your right hand, then push your butt back and lower your torso until it's at a 45 degree angle with the floor. Keep the kettlebell close to your shin. This is the start. Row the bell toward the right side of your rib cage, keeping your hips and shoulders square. Lower with control. That's 1 rep; do 10 per side. Do 3 sets.

FINISHER



KETTLEBELL SWING

▲ Stand with your feet wider than shoulder width, a kettlebell about a foot in front of you. Push your butt back, bend your knees slightly, and lower your torso, reaching forward to grasp the bell with both hands. Keeping your arms relaxed, explosively pull the bell back between your legs. Now stand and squeeze your glutes; this will propel the bell forward. As it reaches its apex and swings backward, push your butt back again, beginning the next rep. Work for 45 seconds, then rest for 15 seconds. Repeat for 5 sets.

TANK BY **ATHLETEGY;** SHORTS BY **GYM SHARK;** SOCKS BY **UNDER ARMOUR;** SHOES BY **NIKE.**

IS CURCUMIN A CURE-ALL?

Supplement makers hype this anti-inflammatory as a pain blocker and heart helper. Surprise—some of the hype is even true!

BY TAYLYN WASHINGTON-HARMON

THE CLAIMS

Supplement sellers say that curcumin, the active compound in turmeric root, can reduce the chronic inflammation that can increase pain and your risk of fatigue, heart disease, and irritable bowel syndrome. And, they argue, they've got the scientific research to back all this up.

WHAT'S TRUE

"The data on curcumin is not the most robust, but it does have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties," says Brian St. Pierre, R.D., a *Men's Health* advisor. Studies show that curcumin reduces inflammation related to IBS, muscle fatigue, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease.

WHAT'S TRICKY

Yes, a 2021 review found that curcumin supplementation helped people with inflammatory diseases, particularly when used with other drug therapies. But popping a pill now and then isn't going to make any difference, says St. Pierre. It's on you to regularly and diligently take the supplement.

SHOULD YOU TAKE IT?

If you have chronic fatigue and/or pain, IBS, heart trouble, or diabetes, there's a good chance curcumin can help, though you'll want to talk to your doctor before you take it. Curcumin may mess with your iron absorption, especially if you're on blood thinners, says Shinta Galej, a registered dietitian in New York City.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

You want a supplement with a 1,000mg recommended dosage. And always buy a brand that has a third-party certification, such as NSF or Informed Choice, to ensure that what's advertised on the label is actually in the product itself.

Christopher Griffith/Trunk Archive

BRING YOUR A GAME



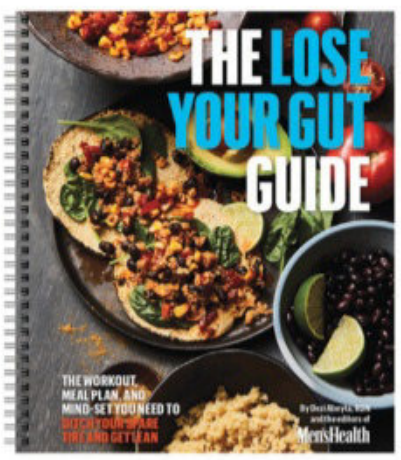
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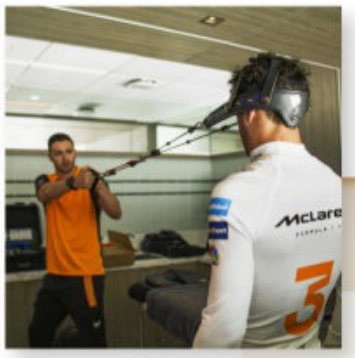
Men'sHealth SHOP

TRAIN LIKE:

DANIEL RICCIARDO

FORMULA 1 DRIVER

AT MORE THAN 200 mph down a track's straight—and over 100 mph around a turn—Formula 1 drivers need total-body strength to control the car. Here's how McLaren's **DANIEL RICCIARDO** prepares for race day. —**JOSHUA ST. CLAIR**



PROTECT the Neck

Ricciardo favors a **neck harness and resistance band for building both strength and endurance.** For strength, trainer Michael Italiano has Ricciardo step back with the band taut around the back of his head. Ricciardo then moves his head from side to side, for 4 sets of 30 repetitions. For endurance, the band pulls Ricciardo's head in one direction as he tries to keep his neck stable. This endurance hold imitates the g-forces in cornering.



STABILIZE the Body

Alongside Ricciardo's go-to mobility move, the **goblet squat,** Italiano puts the driver through a **full-body strength circuit**—dumbbell farmer's walks (45 seconds), TRX inverted rows (15 reps), handstand wall holds (45 seconds), dumbbell overhead walking lunges (12 reps), and kettlebell plant pull-throughs (16 reps). As with his core routine, Ricciardo does 5 sets, with 30 seconds of rest between exercises and 2 minutes between sets.

STRENGTHEN the Core

Ricciardo and Italiano use a combination of **traditional ab exercises and F1-specific positions.** The former includes a 4-move series—hollow-body holds (45 seconds), side planks (45 seconds), prone planks (90 seconds), and swimmers (15 reps)—for 5 sets, with 30 seconds of rest between exercises and 2 minutes between sets.

For a more driver-centric exercise, Ricciardo sits on a **med ball with his feet extended on a Bosu ball.** He holds a weight plate like a steering wheel, twisting it back and forth.



▶ **NOW FLIP the issue over and learn how Ricciardo dresses to stay cool on and off the track.**

Corey Wilson (Ricciardo and Italiano); AP Images (remaining).

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THE FERTILITY CRISIS NOBODY'S TALKING ABOUT

Sperm quality has been on a global decline for years. But only recently did we find out that Black men are suffering worst of all.

BY MELANIE CURRY



CARL LAMBERT, M.D., has seen it all after telling his male patients *they* are the reason their partner can't get pregnant: despair, desperation, even flat-out denial. But Dr. Lambert, a primary-care doctor who treats couples having trouble with fertility at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago, says he never imagined *he'd* be the one to have those feelings.

In early 2020, after trying for a baby with his wife for two years, he was told by a fertility doctor that his sperm quality wasn't right for conception. It didn't matter that he was a physician specializing in infertility. At that moment, he was a man—a Black man at that—and the idea that his sperm was the problem was unfathomable, he says.

You've probably read the news about how sperm health has been tanking globally. Back in 1992, a study in the *British Medical Journal* sounded alarms that we were in a crisis—sperm quality and quantity had been steadily declining for 50 years. Another report 25 years later corroborated the downward trend.

Still, it's been easy for Black men to think this doesn't apply to them. After all, nobody talks about it. Focus groups of Black men in D. C., convened by a researcher named Nathan McCray when he was a graduate student at the George Washington University in 2015, confirmed that infertility was seen as a "threat to masculinity" and a "taboo subject in the African American community." Plus, it's not like there was a lot of research on infertility in Black men.

Actually, McCray noticed that there was basically none. "Most often, these studies—that's if they even report on men of color—only have 2 to 10 percent. Men and women of color are pigeonholed into studies on STD or HIV risk. And as a result, you have this kind of [perception] of infertility being a white person's problem."

A small study done by McCray and colleagues at George Washington found that it's very much not. Their research saw that the Black men in their study had even *lower* sperm concentrations and motility compared with other men.

WHY THE DROP?

THERE'S NO SINGLE REASON why Black men's sperm health is in trouble; in fact, there are lots of possible explanations. Many stem from environmental racism—institutionalized policies and practices that disproportionately burden certain neighborhoods with hazards like toxic-waste facilities and power plants. Those neighborhoods tend to comprise people with low incomes and people of color and also often have a dearth of readily available fresh food. That leaves many Black men exposed to health threats, including these sperm wreckers:

ILLUSTRATION BY **NATE KITCH**

Endocrine-Disrupting Chemicals (EDCs)

▶ What they're in: pesticides, building materials, clothing, electronics, and many other products. Although everyone is exposed to such chemicals daily, Black men have higher levels in their bodies. "The accumulation of these chemical exposures is based on where they live, the air they breathe, the occupations they're marginalized to have," explains Jasmine McDonald, Ph.D., an assistant professor of epidemiology at Columbia University. And this consistent and disproportionate exposure to EDCs affects the sperm health of Black men, says Ali Dabaja, M.D., a urologist at Henry Ford Health.

Tainted Water

▶ Almost 40 percent of the U. S. population drinks chemically contaminated water, according to a report by the National Resources Defense Council—and much of that water flows through the taps in communities that are primarily made up of people of color. Water is contaminated with substances including BPA, cadmium, and lead. "There's a direct relationship between water contamination and sperm health," McDonald says.

Polluted Air

▶ Sixty-eight percent of Black Americans live within 30 miles of a coal-fired power plant, which spews heavy-metal pollutants, including mercury, that have been linked to lower semen quality.

Ground Contaminants

▶ Black people are 75 percent more likely than people of other races to live on or near toxic-waste sites—places ridden with substances, including lead, arsenic, and mercury, that compromise sperm health.

Food Deserts

▶ One in five Black households is located where it's hard to buy fresh, affordable food. So people eat more processed and packaged foods—which means more sperm-tanking EDCs. When fresh foods aren't available, rates of obesity and diabetes also tend to rise, which can raise the risk of less healthy sperm.

STEPS MEN CAN TAKE

A MASSIVE AND systematic overhaul of how we treat the planet and the people on it would be a good first move. Until that happens in a significant way, though, the best thing Black men—or all men, really—can do right now is take some small steps to improve sperm health.

Find New Habits

▶ The most important way to give sperm a hand is to quit smoking. Yes, even weed. Smoking cannabis can decrease sperm count and double the chances of abnormal sperm development. Your sperm doesn't love when you drink alcohol, either. One study showed that even five drinks a week reduced sperm health.

There's no single reason why Black men's sperm health is in trouble.

Stay Cool

▶ Sperm production may drop when your balls are subjected to heat. Dr. Dabaja recommends avoiding saunas, hot tubs, and hot baths, as well as finding somewhere to put your laptop other than your lap.

Get to Bed

▶ Just as cutting sleep can keep you from functioning well, it does the same for your sperm, especially when you get less than six hours a night. Prioritize sleep, and if you snore or constantly wake up tired, get checked for sleep apnea, which can raise the risk of infertility.

Go Fishing

▶ Omega-3 fatty acids, found in high amounts in tuna and salmon, can increase sperm health, says Dr. Dabaja. To shore up your body's defenses against pollutants in the air, he recommends filling up on antioxidants, including vitamin C, vitamin E, and selenium. You can find these even if fresh food isn't plentiful where you live: Saute frozen spinach or blend it into a smoothie for C , E, and selenium. Canned fish has selenium, too.

Monitor Smart

▶ Plenty of companies would love to sell you a home sperm-test kit for $50 to $80. But it's better to spend your money on a co-pay for an actual doctor. Most home test kits give you information about only *one* aspect of sperm health. A doc can measure many.

Check About an Rx

▶ Dr. Lambert ended up taking the drug clomiphene daily to help boost his sperm production. He also changed his diet, upped his exercise routine, and took steps to manage stress (see "When Your Sperm Is Struggling," at left). All these steps prepped him for the IVF process, which worked after about three months: He and his wife now have a 13-month-old son. ■

WHEN YOUR SPERM IS STRUGGLING

After overcoming disappointment and denial that his sperm wasn't in top shape, Carl Lambert, M.D., made some changes to manage his mind and his stress levels in order to improve his sperm health and his life.

HE RELIED ON HIS CHURCH COMMUNITY.
"The community reaffirmed that my worth is not in testing results. But I encourage people to find support wherever they're comfortable," Dr. Lambert says.

HE FELT WHAT HE WAS FEELING.
Being transparent about your emotions will help you process the pain, he says. He often processed his own through journaling.

HE NORMALIZED THE SITUATION.
A doctor put Dr. Lambert and his wife in touch with another family with fertility struggles. "That was tremendously helpful," he says. "This is a very emotionally charged journey. Don't try to go it alone."

HOW THIS GUY REBOOTED HIS LIFE—AT 36—AFTER HIS HEART ATTACK

BY ALLA KATSNELSON



DOMINIQUE CUNNINGHAM aced his Air Force physical-fitness test the same day he had a heart attack. It was June 2019, and he had just showered but was still sweating and his chest felt tight. His 16-year-old found him on the floor, struggling to breathe. At the hospital, doctors saw his left anterior descending artery was completely blocked and implanted a stent. Cunningham knew he had to turn his health around. "It was actually pretty easy," he says, "because I knew what the alternative was." How he did it:

DIVERSIFY YOUR PROTEIN

▶ **DOCS TOLD CUNNINGHAM** that his "before" diet—lots of fried foods and red meat all the time—was the kind that can raise the risk of cardiovascular disease. (For instance, a 2021 study determined that people who ate the most fried foods were at a 28 percent higher risk of major cardiovascular events than people who ate the least.) **As a result, he overhauled his diet: He went from eating red meat almost daily to cutting it out entirely, opting for leaner proteins and skipping the fried shrimp and fried chicken.** Now dishes like shrimp-and-pesto pasta and grilled chicken with chipotle-orange glaze are in his regular rotation.

FIND YOUR OWN PACE

▶ **AFTER THREE MONTHS** of rehab, Cunningham's doctors cleared him for the gym. He didn't feel ready for strenuous exercise, so he followed his love of basketball and decided to start coaching youth games. **At first, he'd participate with the kids during a few drills, but then he worked his way up to full pace. Between that and weightlifting for about 45 minutes twice a week—a routine he started in rehab**—Cunningham now hits the 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise per week that's recommended to reduce the risk of another attack.

LOOK FOR LOVE IN WORK

▶ **POST–HEART ATTACK,** Cunningham retired from the Air Force and took a job that gave him more time to pursue coaching. He and another retired vet launched a local youth basketball league called Love of Basketball Elite. **Research has found that a sense of purpose—the feeling of a life worth living or usefulness to others—is linked to a lower risk of cardiovascular disease.** Running up and down the court helps lower that risk further.

UNDER 40? YOU'RE STILL AT RISK

2%
INCREASE EVERY YEAR IN HEART ATTACKS IN GUYS 40 AND UNDER, PER THE MOST RECENT DATA (2000 TO 2016). PROCESSED AND SUGARY FOODS ARE LIKELY CONTRIBUTORS, SAYS CUNNINGHAM'S CARDIOLOGIST, CHRISTOPHER MANHART, D.O.

5
NUMBER OF YEARS YOU CAN WAIT BETWEEN CHOLESTEROL CHECKS IF YOU HAVE A LOW RISK OF CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE, PER THE CDC. (START AT AGE 20.) IF YOU HAVE RISK FACTORS, TALK TO A DOC ABOUT FREQUENCY.

15 to 20
NUMBER OF YEARS EARLIER THAT CORONARY HEART DISEASE USUALLY HITS IF YOU HAVE UNTREATED FAMILIAL HYPERCHOLESTEROLEMIA, A GENETIC CONDITION THAT AFFECTS 1 IN 250 PEOPLE.

Courtesy Dominique Cunningham

ADVERTISEMENT



STAYING ACTIVE WITH CBD

Life really does fly by. Before I knew it, my 40s had arrived, and with them came some new gifts from dear ol' Mother Nature—frequent knee pain, stress, low energy and sleeplessness. Now, I'm a realist about these things, I knew I wasn't going to be young and resilient forever. But still, with "middle-age" nearly on my doorstep, I couldn't help but feel a little disheartened. That is until I found my *own* secret weapon. *Another gift from Mother Nature.*

It began a few months back when I was complaining about my aches and pains to my marathon-running buddy, Ben, who is my same age. He casually mentioned how he uses CBD oil to help with his joint pain. He said that CBD has given him more focus and clarity throughout the day and that his lingering muscle and joint discomfort no longer bothered him. He even felt comfortable signing up for back-to-back marathons two weekends in a row this year.

That made even this self-proclaimed skeptic take notice.

But I still had some concerns. According to one study in the Journal of the American Medical Association, 70% of CBD products didn't contain the amount of CBD stated on their labels. And, as a consumer, that's terrifying!

If I was going to do this, I needed to trust the source through and through. My two-fold research process naturally led me to Zebra CBD.

First, I did a quick online poll—and by that, I mean I posed the CBD question on my Facebook page. Call me old fashioned but I wanted to know if there were people whom I trusted (more than anonymous testimonials) who've had success using CBD besides my buddy. That is how I found out that Zebra CBD has a label accuracy guarantee which assures customers like me what is stated on the label is in the product.

Secondly, I wanted cold hard facts. Diving deep into the world of CBD research and clinical studies, I came across Emily Gray M.D., a physician at the University of California at San Diego (UCSD) Medical School and medical advisor for Zebra CBD who is researching the effects of CBD. Dr. Gray wrote "early results with CBD have been promising and we have a lot of research underway now. I've had several patients using CBD with good success. It's important that you know your source of CBD and how to use it properly."

After hearing it from the doctor's mouth, I returned to my online poll and was amazed by the number of close friends and family who were already on the CBD train. Apparently, I was the only one without a clue! And funny enough, a couple of friends who commented were using the same brand as my buddy—Zebra CBD. There was no consensus as to why they were using CBD, but the top reasons given were for muscle & joint discomfort, mood support, sleep support, stress and headaches, as well as supporting overall health & wellness.

Eventually, even the most skeptical of the bunch can be won over. With a trusted CBD source in mind, I decided to try it.

When I viewed Zebra CBD's selection online, I was impressed by its array of products, including CBD oils called tinctures, topicals, chewable tablets, mints and gummies. After reading on their website that all their products are made with organically-grown hemp, I ordered... and it arrived within 2 days!

The first product I tried was the rub. Now this stuff was strong. Immediately after rubbing it on my knee, the soothing effects kicked in. It had that familiar menthol cooling effect, which I personally find very relieving. And the best part is, after two weeks of using it, my knee pain no longer affected my daily mobility and it's helping me stay active.

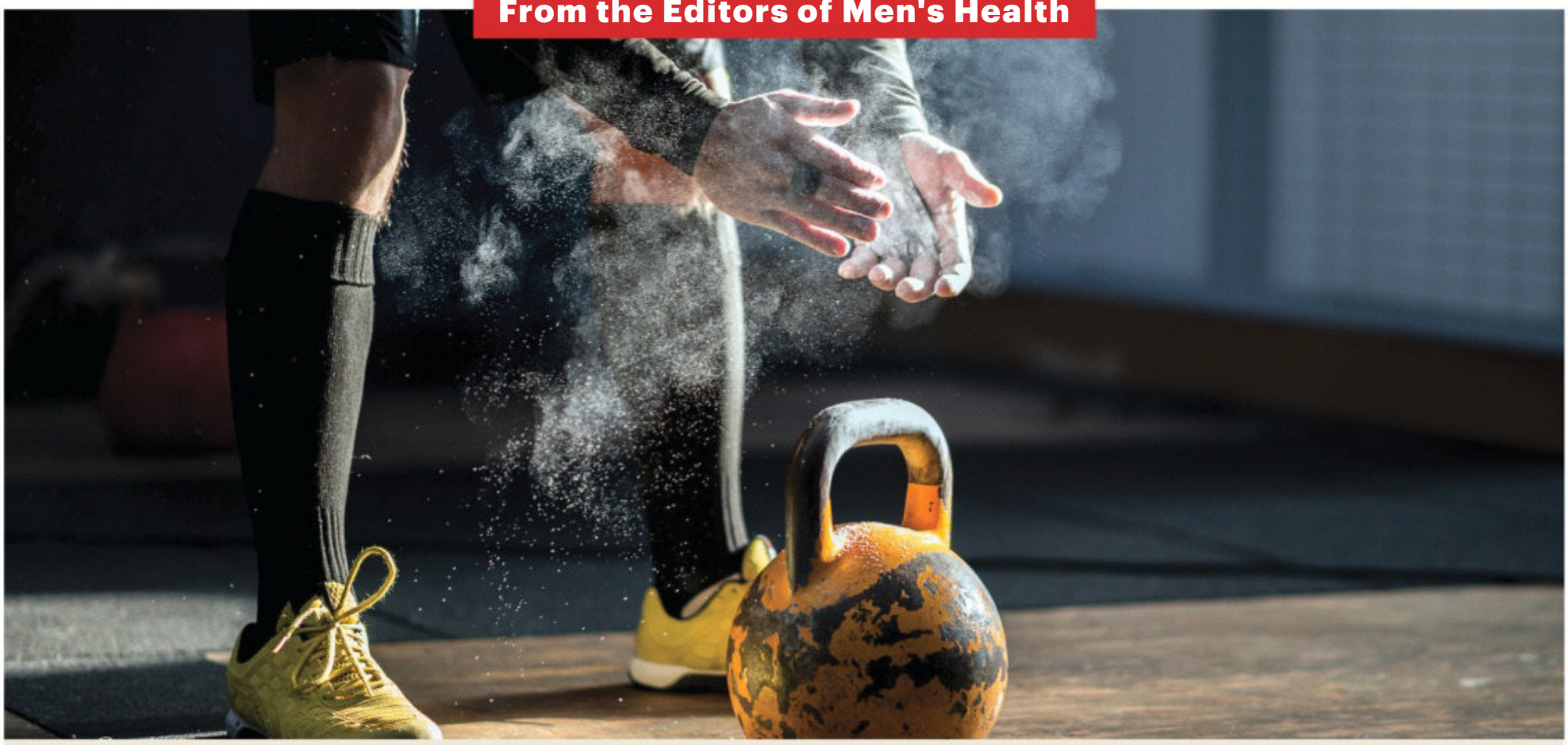
The Zebra Gummies, on the other hand, had a different but equally positive effect on my body. To take it, the instructions suggest chewing thoroughly. This was simple enough, and the taste was, well, lemony. After about 15 minutes, a sense of calm came over my body. It's hard to describe exactly; it's definitely not a "high" feeling. It's more like an overall sense of relaxation—but well worth it. Needless to say, I will being using these again.

While it hasn't been a catch-all fix to every one of my health issues, it has eased the level and frequency of my aches. And it sure doesn't seem like a coincidence how much calmer and more focused I am.

All-in-all, CBD is one of those things that you have to try for yourself. Although I was skeptical at first, I can say that I'm now a Zebra CBD fan and that I highly recommend their products. My 40s are looking up!

Also, I managed to speak with a company spokesperson willing to provide an exclusive offer to MH readers. If you order this month, you'll receive $10 off your first order by using promo code "**MH10**" at checkout. Plus, the company offers a 100% No-Hassle, Money-Back Guarantee. You can try it yourself and order Zebra CBD at ZebraCBD.com/Men or at 1-888-762-2699.

From the Editors of Men's Health



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BACK TO SCHOOL! (FOR YOU?)



Whether you want to give your **mind a workout** or **find a whole new line of work,** the **real trick is schooling yourself** on where to enroll.

BY KEVIN SWAN

I WOULD CONSIDER MYSELF intelligent and successful, but when it comes to the economy, I have no clue. What I usually do when I have a financial question is ask my family, all of whom have M.B.A.'s. But because they've been taking more and more time to respond to my emails asking them to explain NFTs (again), I knew I had to gain more intellectual independence. I knew I should probably head back to school.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY **JEFFREY WESTBROOK**

Luckily for me, online learning has boomed during the past two years. Covid pushed face-to-face university courses online, while shelter-in-place measures made people want to learn again. In fact, U. S. searches for *online learning, e-learning,* and *massive online open courses* (or MOOCs; more on those later) increased up to fourfold between late March and early April 2020, according to a 2020 report. Part of that might have been lockdown boredom, but you can't ignore availability, either. The pandemic also increased enrollment in online courses by 93 percent, according to 2020 data from NC-SARA, a nonprofit helping distance-education programs.

Despite all this, I still had my reservations about reenrolling. The last time I had to attend an actual class was the spring of 2004 as a broadcast-journalism major. Since then, Tom Brady has won five Super Bowl rings, eight new Supreme Court justices have been appointed, and Twitter has become a thing.

And then there was the whole ordeal of what kind of class to choose. Every scholastic entity from the University of Phoenix to Harvard Business School offers online courses and degrees. Sites like MasterClass, Skillshare, Mindvalley, and LinkedIn Learning all offer multi-unit programs. And MOOCs hosted by organizations like Coursera offer free college-level classes—from English Composition I to Game Theory—to students across the planet. After considering all this, I felt like I needed to take a class on how to take a class. So I contacted Becky Klein-Collins, author of *Never Too Late: The Adult Student's Guide to College.*

"My advice to someone interested in returning to learning in some way is to be very clear about what the person's goals are," Klein-Collins says. If you're a guy looking to climb the corporate ladder (or switch to a whole new ladder), Klein-Collins recommends asking your employer what kind of skills or credentials are needed for your goal. "More and more, employers are open to alternative credentials—not just a bachelor's degree—especially if they are credentials that have cachet in a particular industry," she says.

But then there are guys like me, who just want to advance their understanding instead of their career. For those people, Klein-Collins recommends what she describes as "minimal-commitment, user-friendly online options [that cover] some basic material."

I was never a fan of school, but I'm all about "minimal commitment," so I followed Klein-Collins's advice and enrolled in Paul Krugman Teaches Economics and Society on MasterClass.com. Krugman, for the unfamiliar, received the Nobel in economics in 2008 and is an op-ed columnist for *The New York Times*. MasterClass costs $180 for an annual membership, which gives you access to its vast bank of classes. (Bill Nye on science and problem-solving! Cornel West on philosophy!)

My Krugman-led class included 22 lessons, each under about 15 minutes. Although I fully intended to start from the beginning and watch every single session, after the second day, I started to episode-hop, fast-forwarding to the good parts. (How great would this trick have been back in college?) Krugman assigned me no homework, he didn't demand I show up at a specific start time, and he didn't give a single test. Relieved of



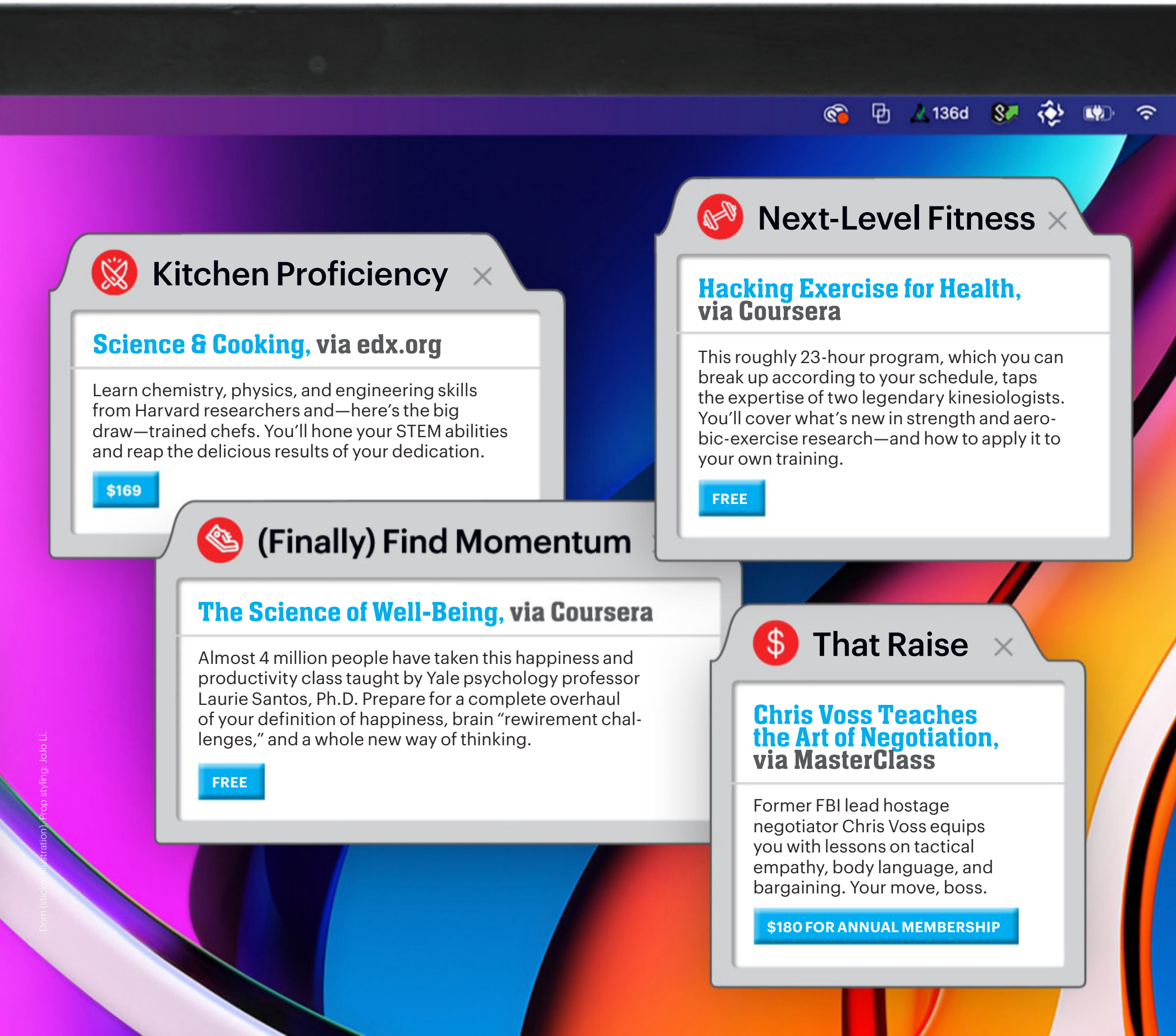
pressure and restrictions, I found that I actually retained more. I was watching to develop instead of simply regurgitate.

And I was surprised that I was finally able to comprehend topics like taxes and the Great Recession of 2008. Maybe it was that MasterClass broke up complex topics into bite-sized nuggets. But I couldn't help thinking there was something more important at work: Maybe it was that I didn't *have* to learn.

Whether you're watching an expert-led video series or enrolling in a subject-driven global online course, that enthusiasm is key. Research backs this up: A 2021 study found that students participated more, were more engaged, and felt better able to understand complex concepts when their teachers got them excited to learn.

There's a snowball effect at work, too. The more you learn, the better you get at learning, according to the work of Ulrich Boser, the author of *Learn Better.* And a life of learning has benefits beyond just knowing stuff. It can lead to a resilient brain, a stronger social life, a bigger paycheck, and a potential off-ramp to a better paying and/or more fulfilling next gig.

After taking Krugman's MasterClass, I began poking around the websites of my local colleges and checking out Coursera. While I still don't understand NFTs, I'm okay with that. Taking a class for fun also made me realize that I don't have to know everything about everything. For curious "minimal commitment" guys like me, it's less about who you want to be and more about understanding who you actually are. Which, coincidentally, will be the first line of my opening MasterClass session, whenever they decide to sign me on. ■



BEST FOODS 20 MensHealth 22 FOR MEN

BEST FOODS FOR MEN

Prices are up. Buying power is down. But tightening your budget shouldn't come at the expense of a healthy, delicious diet. We asked our go-to dietitians for essentials that deliver the most bang for your buck—and taste amazing.

DOLE BANANAS

"Bananas are among the cheapest produce," says Brian St. Pierre, R.D., a *Men's Health* advisor. They also play well with pretty much any other fruit.
Key nutrient: *3g fiber*

KELLOGG'S RAISIN BRAN

It's a good source of eight vitamins and minerals, including magnesium and iron, which aids muscle function. Tastes great, too.
Key nutrient: *7g fiber*

CHOBANI GREEK YOGURT, WHOLE MILK PLAIN (32 OZ)

Buy this high-protein, calcium-rich, tasty stuff by the tub. You'll use it in breakfast bowls, in tuna salad, and as a baked-potato topper.
Key nutrient: *16g protein*

DAVE'S KILLER BREAD EPIC EVERYTHING BREAKFAST BREAD

Two slices of this hearty bread have as much fiber as a medium apple *and* a decent amount of protein. And the "everything" variety tastes just like a bagel.
Key nutrient: *2g fiber*

WYMAN'S TRIPLE BERRY

"Frozen berries are significantly cheaper than fresh, are just as nutritious, and are a great option to help keep berries in your rotation," says St. Pierre.
Key nutrient: *7g fiber*

KODIAK CAKES PROTEIN OATS

Oats are cheap. Protein powder is not. But these whole-grain oats contain pea-protein concentrate. Make them with milk and top with peanuts for a simple protein-packed meal, says Abby Langer, R.D.
Key nutrient: *10g protein*

SUN-MAID DRIED MISSION FIGS

"With five grams of fiber for every three to five figs, these are a great way to add to your daily total fruit intake," says *MH* advisor Chris Mohr, R.D.
Key nutrient: *5g fiber*

CLIF NUT BUTTER BAR, PEANUT BUTTER

The whole grains, protein, and dose of good fats in this nutritionally balanced snack bar will help you power through to your next meal.
Key nutrient: *11g fat*

Food styling: Rebecca Jurkevich. Prop styling: Stephanie Yeh.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY **CHRISTOPHER TESTANI**

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BEST FOODS FOR MEN 20 22 Men'sHealth

TRIDENT SEAFOODS ALASKA SALMON BURGERS

They're an easy, flavorful source of omega-3's, says Dezi Abeyta, R.D.N., an *MH* advisor. Crumble into tacos, pop on a breakfast sandwich, or tuck into a pita with tzatziki sauce. **Key nutrient:** *20g protein*

DAISY PURE & NATURAL COTTAGE CHEESE, 4% MILKFAT

A few spoonfuls straight out of the container with a piece of fresh fruit serve as a solid snack any time of day. **Key nutrient:** *13g protein*

MINUTE RED QUINOA & BROWN RICE WITH GARLIC

This mix of whole grains is your new base for protein bowls. (Might we suggest chicken curry or grilled swordfish?) **Key nutrient:** *5g fiber*

A BIG BAG OF POTATOES

Red, russet, yellow—they're all "a source of vitamin C, potassium, and fiber," says Langer. "Best of all, they're a vehicle for anything from tuna and tomatoes to lentils and guacamole." **Key nutrient:** *4g fiber*

WILD PLANET WILD SARDINES IN WATER, NO SALT ADDED

Don't hold your nose. They're loaded with protein, omega-3's, immunity-aiding vitamin D, iron, and potassium. Treat them as you would tuna fish. **Key nutrient:** *18g protein*

CALIFORNIA OLIVE RANCH EXTRA VIRGIN

Olive is rich in antioxidants and healthy fats. This oil is smooth, so it's perfect for cooking, but it has a hint of spiciness, which makes it great for salads, too. **Key nutrient:** *14g fat*

BUSH'S BEST SIDE-KICKS SOUTHWEST ZEST PINTO BEANS

Beans are an inexpensive source of fiber, protein, iron, and more. This can contains tender, creamy beans preseasoned with jalapeño and cilantro. **Key nutrient:** *5g fiber*

EGGLAND'S BEST CLASSIC EGGS

Eggs have it all: protein, vitamin D, omega-3 fatty acids. This brand's eggs taste bright, clean, and fresh. **Key nutrient:** *6g protein*

PLANTERS NUT-RITION *MEN'S HEALTH* MIX

Yes, we helped build this combo of peanuts, almonds, and pistachios. Each nut brings its own health benefits. **Key nutrient:** *14g fat*

MORE SUPERMARKET SAVIORS
For 30 additional Best Foods for Men—from beer to bacon—head to *MensHealth.com/bestfoods2022*.

COMBINE THESE 3, MAKE A MEAL



THE PROTEIN: BELL & EVANS CHICKEN THIGHS

They're cheaper than breasts but have the same amount of protein. Roasted, these thighs taste rich and meaty. **Per 4 oz:** *250 cals, 20g protein, 0g carbs, 19g fat*



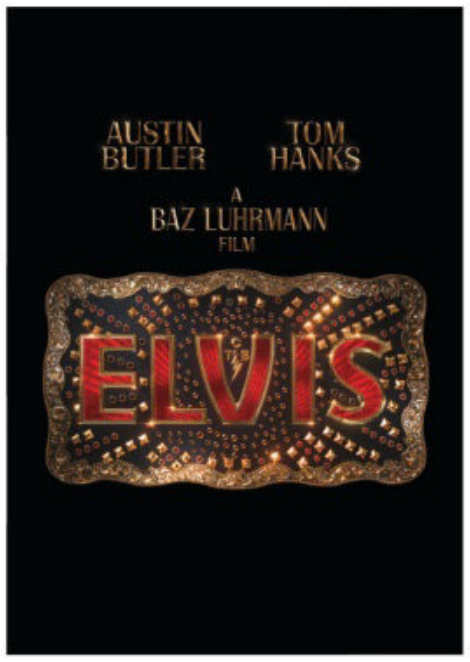
THE SIDE: BIRDS EYE NORMANDY BLEND

The broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, zucchini, and squash make for a simple, antioxidant-loaded side. **Per ¾ cup:** *20 cals, <1g protein, 3g carbs (1g fiber, 0g added sugar), 0g fat*



THE SALAD: EARTHBOUND FARM BABY SPINACH

Greens house troves of nutrients, but spinach is as good in a salad as it is wilted in oil. **Per 5 oz:** *40 cals, 4g protein, 5g carbs (3g fiber, 0g added sugar), 1g fat*



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▲ Chicken Tinga Tostadas

NO-SWEAT POST-WORKOUT MUSCLE MEALS

You shouldn't have to sacrifice flavor or protein to eat on a budget. All you have to do is shop smart and batch-prep. With our new 5 for $50 plan, you'll create meals that go hard on muscle building and easy on your bank account. **BY MATTHEW KADEY, R.D.**



SHOP IT

We're guessing you have cooking oil and seasonings. Scan here for a grocery list that accounts for everything else.

PREP IT

Carve out an hour or two on a Sunday to make the building blocks for five meals. Think of it as kitchen sweat equity, with a payoff of eating awesome all week.

CHICKEN TINGA:

1. In a large pot, heat **2 tsp oil** over medium high. Add **1 onion** (chopped). Saute till soft, about 5 minutes.
2. Stir in **2 garlic cloves** (minced), **1 chipotle pepper** (chopped), **1 tsp dried oregano,** and **½ tsp cumin.** Cook 1 minute.
3. Add **1 can diced tomatoes** with juices, **4 boneless, skinless chicken thighs,** and **1 cup corn.** Cook till chicken is 165°F, about 15 minutes.
4. Transfer the meat to a cutting board, shred, stir it back into the sauce, and season. Refrigerate till ready to pack.

SAAG SAUCE:

1. In a medium pan, heat **2 tsp oil** over medium. Add **½ cup onion** (chopped) and cook 3 minutes.
2. Add **2 garlic cloves** (minced) and **1 Tbsp ginger** (chopped); cook 1 minute. Add **1 tsp garam masala, ½ tsp cumin, ⅛ tsp cayenne, ½ tsp salt,** and **3 cups spinach.** Saute until wilted.
3. In a blender, add the spinach mixture, **⅓ cup plain yogurt, ⅓ cup cilantro,** and **2 tsp fresh lemon juice.** Blend until smooth. Set aside till ready to pack.

THE EXTRAS:

1. Salt and pepper **2 chicken thighs** in an oiled pan over medium high, 4 minutes per side. Chop and set aside.
2. Preheat your oven to 350°F. Arrange **3 corn tortillas** in a single layer on a baking sheet and brush with oil on each side. Bake until crispy, about 12 minutes.
3. Mash **½ cup black beans** with 2 Tbsp liquid from the can, **¼ tsp cumin powder,** and **2 tsp fresh lime juice.** Set aside.
4. Cube the **tofu.** Set aside.



Food styling: Rebecca Jurkevich. Prop styling: Stephanie Yeh.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY **CHRISTOPHER TESTANI**



2 Chicken and Rice

3 Chicken Tinga Burrito Bowl

4 Tofu Saag Bowl

5 Chili Tofu Tacos

▶ **THE EXPERT: MATTHEW KADEY** *is a registered dietitian and the author of* Rocket Fuel: Power-Packed Food for Sports and Adventure.

PACK IT

Here's how to stash everything to reheat and eat all week. Each of these five meals has more than the 30 grams of protein you need to build muscle.

1 Chicken Tinga Tostadas

Pack each separately: crispy ***corn tortillas, mashed beans,*** and ***1 cup chicken tinga*** topped with ***3 Tbsp pumpkin seeds.*** Spread the black-bean mash on the tortillas and top each with ⅓ cup reheated tinga.

Nutrition per meal: 734 cals, 36g protein, 103g carbs (20g fiber), 21g fat

2 Chicken and Rice

In a container, add ***1 cup brown rice, ¼ cup chopped onion, ½ Tbsp minced ginger, ¼ cup corn, 1 minced garlic clove,*** and the ***chopped chicken.*** Reheat 3 minutes.

736 cals, 62g protein, 59g carbs (5g fiber), 23g fat

3 Chicken Tinga Burrito Bowl

Pack ***1½ cups chicken tinga.*** In another container, layer ***2 cups premade broccoli slaw*** (scan the code on the opposite page for more info), ***¼ cup avocado salsa*** (ditto), the remaining ***black beans*** (rinsed), ***1 Tbsp pumpkin seeds,*** a ***lime wedge,*** and ***cilantro.*** Mix the reheated tinga with the other ingredients.

516 cals, 39g protein, 70g carbs (22g fiber), 11g fat

4 Tofu Saag Bowl

Layer the remaining ***rice,*** the ***saag sauce,*** and half the ***tofu.*** Pack a handful of ***cilantro leaves*** to add on top, if you want.

600 cals, 33g protein, 63g carbs (11g fiber), 26g fat

5 Chili Tofu Tacos

Season the remaining ***tofu*** with ***2 tsp chili powder*** and pack. In another container, pack ***3 tortillas.*** In a third, layer ***1 cup slaw mix*** and ***¼ cup avocado salsa.*** Reheat the tofu and tortillas, then assemble the tacos.

682 cals, 35g protein, 82g carbs (17g fiber), 24g fat

PARTY ON THE PATIO!

Take the fun outside with the best new grilling, chilling, and stargazing gear. Bonus: This stuff all works well on rooftops and by apartment pools, too. Fire escapes? Probably not. **BY CHRISTIAN GOLLAYAN**

Your New Firepit:



Tiki Patio
A stainless-steel tub houses a central cone designed to cut buzz-killing smoke and debris so fires burn clean. Then, when the party is over, the ash catcher underneath makes for easy cleanup. ***$395; tikibrand.com***

▼ Your New Telescope:

Celestron StarSense Explorer Dx 130mm
This beginner-friendly scope can let you see Saturn. Hook it up to a smartphone app to power up the StarSense feature, which shows you how to align your lens with galaxies and planets within view. No spaceship required. ***$480; celestron.com***





▲ Your New Grill:

Spark
Plug in this electric-powered rig, turn the ignition dial, and light Spark's compostable charcoal "briqs." The compressed hardwood coals fuel the cooking with heat and add flavor. ***$1,099; sparkgrills.com***

▼ Your New Beat Box:

Sonos Move
This football-sized speaker powers playlists and thumps with devices twice as big. It's also voice-control-enabled for those lazy days or nights you don't want to get off your lawn chair. ***$399; sonos.com***

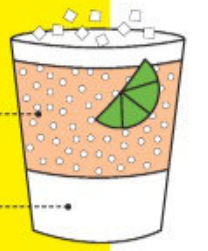


Two's Company

Go easier on cocktailing by bumping down the booze in these two-ingredient drinks.
—SUSANNAH SKIVER BARTON, SPIRITS EXPERT

PALOMA

2 PARTS GRAPEFRUIT SODA
1 PART TEQUILA OR MESCAL



Finish with: a sprinkle of flaky salt, 1 lime wedge

TINTO DE VERANO

1 PART LEMON-LIME SODA
1 PART RED WINE



Finish with: lemon or orange wheels

PORTO TÓNICO

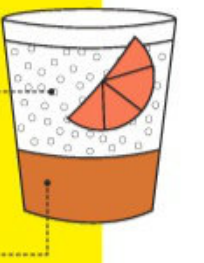
2 PARTS TONIC WATER
1 PART WHITE PORT



Finish with: fruit slices or fresh herbs

HIGHBALL

2 PARTS CLUB SODA OR SELTZER
1 PART DEALER'S CHOICE (WHISKEY, RUM, WHATEVER)



Finish with: 1 citrus peel or wedge

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THE AGE OF WAY TOO MUCH TV

In the world of excess-tainment, where does the epic sprawl of *The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power* fit in? For you, maybe nowhere—and that's okay. **BY EVAN ROMANO**

REMEMBER WHEN watching TV used to be fun? About a decade ago, following popular television meant keeping up with a handful of tentpole shows. As long as you took in the meth-cook madness of *Breaking Bad,* embraced the '60s sleaze of *Mad Men,* and kept your goblet full for *Game of Thrones,* you were basically set. Ah, yes, those were the days: Netflix was still in the fight for streaming dominance, big networks were in a post-*Lost* relevance recession, and *Law & Order* filled in the gaps.

Now TV is *work*. You've already read about the number of services (Disney+, Hulu, HBO Max, and so on) and the sheer volume of programming, but now there's the issue of length. What was once the 22-minute-episode standard of *The Simpsons* grew into the 49 minutes of *Breaking Bad* and then ballooned into *Game of Thrones*' 57-minute mini movies. (*Inventing Anna,* I want all those hours of my life back.) You used to watch one episode a week and be caught up. Now you can watch weeks' worth of TV and still never feel that way.

Which brings us to this month's new debut: Amazon Prime Video's *The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power*. Amazon's latest epic is expected to become the most expensive TV show of all time, with an estimated budget of $1 billion. But then there's the soul-crushing rumor that each of the first few episodes could have a 90-minute run time—movie length.

Tania Yuki, the chief marketing officer of the media-analytics company Comscore, can explain some of this: With streaming shows not having to fit into a set 30- or 60-minute network time slot, there's more freedom. "It makes sense to enable longer episodes, because once you have a captive audience, why not keep them as long as practical rather than risk them switching to another show?" Yuki says.

I guess it makes sense—*for streaming services*. But with so many sprawling stories, how do you keep up? Free time is fleeting, and the decision between catching up on this show, starting that show, or finally finishing up a third is an unnecessary (and, admittedly, silly) form of stress.

I talked to Daniel D'Addario, a chief TV critic for *Variety,* about all this—and he handed me the keys to freedom. "There's so much TV that no one show is going to be a must-watch or must-discuss," he says. That's right. Unburden yourself of the idea that you need to be up-to-date, because it's now *impossible* to be.

"If you're not instantly gripped by the idea of watching it or you don't have time, just move on," D'Addario says. Fans argue that a show "gets good in episode 4" or that "season 2 is better than 1." (Network TV didn't require hours of buildup—it had to earn its keep, every episode, or risk cancellation.) D'Addario recommends going Marie Kondo on your TV habits. If it doesn't spark joy, zap it. If your inner dad can't bear the idea of the drugged-out teens of *Euphoria,* then why bother? If you watch the first 30 minutes of *The Rings of Power* and it doesn't compel you, let it go.

It's not just that there's so much TV but that there's so much *good* TV. Film stars are all in on streaming. Kevin Costner is unstoppable on *Yellowstone*. Ben Stiller's directing on *Severance* makes the show. Kate Winslet carries *Mare of Easttown*. Sure, there's a glut of schlock out there, but you can skip that, too. It's okay not to care what anyone else thinks is must-see TV.

Still can't figure out what to watch? *Law & Order* is now streaming on Hulu. ■

EVAN ROMANO *is the culture editor of* Men's Health.

MY PRECIOUS (TIME)

The first few episodes of *The Rings of Power* are rumored to be 90 minutes long. Here are other things you can do in that amount of time instead.

0 MIN 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 50 55 60 65 70 75 80 85 90

- READ 3.65% OF *WAR AND PEACE*
- RUN A 10K, WITH TIME FOR A BAGEL AND A BANANA AT THE FINISH LINE
- DO THE WORKOUT ON PAGE 22, *THREE TIMES*



Courtesy AMC (*Breaking Bad, Mad Men*). Courtesy Apple TV+ (*Severance*). Courtesy Warner Media (*Mare of Easttown, Euphoria*). Courtesy Netflix (*Squid Game, The Crown, Tiger King*). Courtesy Amazon Studios (*The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power*). Courtesy Alamy (*True Blood*, Gollum). Courtesy Paramount Network (*Yellowstone*). Courtesy Hulu (*Handmaid's Tale*).


VERSACE
EROS
VERSACE
EROS

LIFT HERE TO EXPERIENCE
VERSACE POUR HOMME
DYLAN BLUE

VERSACE

LIFT HERE TO EXPERIENCE
VERSACE EROS



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HEARST HOME

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GET YOUR TEETH IN LINE

Stress-induced grinding, decades of coffee drinking, and all that "forgetting" to floss add up. Here's your fix.

BY GARRETT MUNCE



1 Get on the Schedule

With both your dentist and your brushing, says cosmetic dentist Michael Apa, D.D.S. Schedule a dental visit every six months *minimum*. Brush your teeth twice a day, use toothpaste with fluoride, and floss at least once a day. **Use: CO. BY COLGATE TLC TOOTHBRUSH;** ***$9***

5 Embrace Braces

You may be tempted to go with invisible aligners like Invisalign, but you have to wear them for 22 hours a day, says Dr. Apa. Lingual braces—brackets on the backs of your teeth—are better for people who can't commit to aligners. No matter what you choose, get them from a professional, who can monitor progress. **Use: CANDID CLEAR ALIGNERS;** ***prices vary***

2 Protect Your Gums

Gingivitis, caused by plaque buildup, inflames the gums, says cosmetic dentist Marc Lowenberg, D.D.S. Ensure you're brushing the gumline, where plaque lurks. **Use: ORAL-B IO SERIES 9 ELECTRIC TOOTHBRUSH;** ***$300***



3 Slow the Grind

Habitual grinders wear teeth down, which can lead to root canals. A dentist can fit you with a night guard, which costs $300 to $1,000. But an "over-the-counter guard is better than nothing," Dr. Lowenberg says. **Use: DENTEK PROFESSIONAL-FIT DENTAL GUARD;** ***$25***



4 Whiten Up

Genetics determines teeth whiteness, says Dr. Lowenberg. "My recommendation is that patients have a professional cleaning and in-house whitening treatment done back-to-back every six months and then use at-home kits to maintain results," says Dr. Apa. **Use: AURAGLOW CUSTOM WHITENING KIT;** ***$45***

THE SECRET **HOLLYWOOD TOOTH FAIRY**

(IT'S VENEERS.) These thin porcelain shells permanently attach to your teeth and are responsible for pretty much every A-list smile you see on screens large and small. While veneers may create a perfect-looking smile, they're also restorative, says Dr. Apa. Veneers can "change collapsed bites, underbites, overbites," he says. They aren't cheap—the average veneers cost $2,000 to $5,000 *per tooth*—but they're the gold standard.

Dan Forbes

ADVERTISEMENT



STAY FIT AND LOOKING GREAT

Shakes are a great way to lose that extra weight

BEING A TRAINER, BODYBUILDER, and nutrition expert means that companies frequently send me their products and ask for my stamp of approval. Most of the time I dive into research, test the product out, and send the company honest feedback. Sometimes, however, I refuse to give the product a try, because frankly, the ingredients inside aren't real food. And I'd rather drink diesel fuel than torture my body with a chemical concoction.

Like my father always said, "What you put inside your body always shows up on the outside."

One protein shake that I received, that will remain nameless, was touted as 'the next big shake' but really had a list of gut destroying ingredients. Everywhere I read I saw harmful artificial ingredients, added sugars, synthetic dyes, preservatives and cheap proteins; the kind of proteins that keep you fat no matter how hard you hit the gym, sap your energy and do nothing for your muscles.

Disappointed after reviewing this "new" shake, I hit the gym and bumped into my favorite bodybuilding coach. This guy is pushing 50, has the energy of a college kid, and is ripped. So are his clients.

While I firmly believe that the gym is a no-talk focus zone, I had to ask, "Hey Zee, what protein shake are you recommending to your clients these days?"

Zee looked at me, and shook his head. "Protein shakes are old news and loaded with junk. I don't recommend protein shakes, I tell my clients to drink INVIGOR8 Superfood Shake because it's the only all natural meal replacement that works and has a taste so good that it's addicting."

Being skeptical of what Zee told me, I decided to investigate this superfood shake called INVIGOR8.

Turns out INVIGOR8 Superfood Shake has a near 5-star rating on Amazon. The creators are actual scientists and personal trainers who set out to create a complete meal replacement shake chocked full of superfoods that—get this—actually accelerate how quickly and easily you lose belly fat and builds even more lean, calorie burning muscle.

We all know that the more muscle you build, the more calories you burn. The more fat you melt away the more definition you get in your arms, pecs and abs.

The makers of INVIGOR8 were determined to make the first complete, natural, non-GMO superfood shake that helps you lose fat and build lean muscle. The result is a shake that contains 100% grass-fed whey that has a superior nutrient profile to the grain-fed whey found in most shakes, metabolism boosting raw coconut oil, hormone free colostrum to promote a healthy immune system, Omega 3, 6, 9-rich chia and flaxseeds, superfood greens like kale, spinach, broccoli, alfalfa, and chlorella, and clinically tested cognitive enhancers for improved mood and brain function. The company even went a step further by including a balance of pre and probiotics for regularity in optimal digestive health, and digestive enzymes so your body absorbs the high-caliber nutrition you get from INVIGOR8.

While there are over 500 testimonials on Amazon about how INVIGOR8 "gave me more energy and stamina" and "melts away abdominal fat like butter on a hot sidewalk", what really impressed me was how many customers raved about the taste. So I had to give it a try.

When it arrived I gave it the sniff test. Unlike most meal replacement shakes it smelled like whole food, not a chemical factory. So far so good. Still INVIGOR8 had to pass the most important test, the taste test.

And INVIGOR8 was good. Better than good. I could see what Zee meant when he said his clients found the taste addicting.

I also wanted to see if Invigor8 would help me burn that body fat I'd tried to shave off for years to achieve total definition.

Just a few weeks later I'm pleased to say, shaving that last abdominal fat from my midsection wasn't just easy. It was delicious.

Considering all the shakes I've tried I can honestly say that the results I've experienced from INVIGOR8 are nothing short of astonishing.

A company spokesperson confirmed an exclusive offer for Men's Health readers: if you order INVIGOR8 this month, you'll receive $10 off your first order by using promo code "**MEN**" at checkout. If you're in a rush to burn fat, restore lean muscle and boost your stamina and energy you can order INVIGOR8 today at Invigor8.com or by calling 1-800-958-3392.

▶ **THIS MONTH: OLIVER JEFFERS** *is a writer and illustrator of numerous children's books, including* Stuck, Here We Are: Notes for Living on Planet Earth, *and* What We'll Build.



IT'S TIME TO GET DRESSED!

Fatherhood and fashion make for a good fit—until someone grows out of it. BY OLIVER JEFFERS

WHEN MY SON WAS BORN,

I didn't think he'd grow into a small human I would enjoy dressing. I fully acknowledge that this is an odd statement. I'd assume most American fathers look forward to the day they can throw around a football with their kid (I'm Irish, so it's *fútbol*) or mow the lawn with them on their lap (okay, yes, we have lawns, too).

But when my son turned two, something seismic happened: He could wear an outfit for more than four hours without decorating it in either bodily or food-related by-product. His ability to remain relatively clean and my interest in fashion aligned, and suddenly we had something in common.

From ages two to four, my son would let me dress him in anything. Striped leggings with a pair of red wellies, a turtleneck, and a baseball cap—all topped off with a bright-yellow raincoat. A classic French chore coat with a sailor's sweater and a wool cap akimbo, just so. He would wear it all, at least for a bit, and he always looked *great*.

I'll admit that I may have treated my son as my accessory during this time, sometimes even going so far as to pick his outfit to complement mine. Fashion was the one area of parenting where I felt like I had control. Sleep schedules, mealtimes, and work-life balance were in complete chaos, but if my son and I looked sharp, I felt like I had at least one thing in order.

Then everything fell apart. During Christmas 2019, our family traveled to my older brother's house in Belfast. My son's older cousins are both avid Manchester United fans who I don't believe wear anything except head-to-toe United kits. My son looked at his trendy lumberjack overalls and plaid shirt and suddenly seemed disappointed. After that Christmas, he only wanted to wear clothes you wear to play sports—and he no longer wanted help getting dressed. We were back to chaos.

In late 2021, this all came to a head, as most things do, when I was trying to get my son out the door and into the car. He had misplaced a hat he thought would complete his outfit (it didn't, but whatever) and I betrayed my usual calm by grumpily grunting, "You look fine! Now get in the car!" We left without the hat, he cried, and my wife offered some calm, sage wisdom: "It's not about what you wear; it's about how you feel." I'm not sure whether those words were for me or my son, but they landed for both of us.

My son was growing into what all parents fear yet also desperately crave: independence. Trying to control him would only ever lead to more blowups. Since Hat-Pocalypse '21, I've learned to accept my son's own developing sense of style. And we've found so many other ways to connect beyond style (space! painting! camping!) that I haven't had to buy a *fútbol* jersey. Yet. ■

"I'll admit that I may have treated my son as my accessory during this time, sometimes even going so far as to pick his outfit to complement mine."

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ADVENTURES IN BINGE THERAPY

If one shrink couldn't resolve an anxiety-borne tic, would a squad of them work better?

BY MATT SULLIVAN

AT SOME POINT AFTER, I dunno, maybe the 12th time that the pandemic did not in fact "end," my Hot Vax Summer got so compounded by stress—another kid on the way, dad in the hospital, cross-country move—that I felt almost blind. A tic, which began with occasional blinking, had devolved into a full-on

ILLUSTRATION BY **EDMON DE HARO**

facial contortion, all squinting and snorting and—*ahem!*—a socially awkward clearing of the throat. Strangers asked if I was okay, then shuddered. I wore sunglasses in the shade.

The eye doctor deferred to Therapist No. 1, also known as my judgmental analyst and her weekly hour of couch-bound guilt, but rambling about my mother was no cure for a case of the blinks. For a second opinion, I turned to my second mental-health regular—aka Therapist No. 2, aka my psychiatrist, aka the overpriced drug dealer for my anxiety medication—then asked her to refer me to a third opinion. And a fourth. And a fifth. If you could expect a menu for your mouth, I figured, why not a buffet for your brain? Why order the usual when you could try it all and choose a new favorite?

My shrink suggested three additional options: a solo specialist in a different, more interactive brand of therapy; a self-help group; and a textbook featuring 422 pages of mental-health workouts. Indeed, I was assured that any one of these referrals could function more like a new personal trainer offering exercises in cognitive jujitsu—no Xanax required, no couches allowed. Determined to outsmart the tic at any cost or insurance premium, I signed up for all of the above. These new modalities might take at least a month or two to rewire my worst instincts, but then, as Therapist No. 3 soon promised, "You become your own therapist."

We can be at our most stressed-out during moments of alleged calm.

THERAPIST NO. 3:

THE RADICAL

STEFANIE SUGAR, PSY.D., struck me as more of a teacher, really, than a judge. At our initial appointment, the founder of New York City's Behavioral Psych Studio navigated me through the school of problem-solving known as dialectical behavioral therapy. DBT was first developed in the 1970s by the revered psychologist Marsha Linehan, Ph.D., for patients with urges toward self-harm and borderline personality disorder who'd sat on the couch for years, invalidated and in danger. "The problem," Linehan once said, "is talking—being listened to and understood—doesn't necessarily make anything change." Her method was not to diagnose madness but rather to engage a commitment, then to build a lifelong tool kit that could be tailored for the shrink averse.

DBT has since expanded into an entire university of mindfulness to address everyday stressors including sleepless nights and partner conflicts. Linehan always sort of cribbed from Buddhism, Sugar told me, and the most relevant of today's behavioral-therapy brain hacks is a decidedly Zen approach: "radical acceptance."

In the face of crises as sprawling as Covid or as personal as a tic, our natural instinct is denial, especially and obviously when it comes to bad habits like drinking and gambling. But let's say you're a tennis fanatic and you've started to feel a pinch in your back lately—a bad pinch that docs haven't been able to resolve. What if, instead of presuming you'd never pick up a racket again, you admitted to having that pain in bed each morning and decided not to let it bother you? What if I stopped worrying about snorting like a pig and learned to love the tic? "Radical acceptance sounds really kind of simple," Sugar said, "but it's incredibly difficult to practice, because we don't want to do it—the *radical* is in there because it takes all of you."

At the end of our next session, Sugar gave me my first homework assignment since college: a stress diary, which was more like an Apple Notes file to log all the places where I flared my nostrils, coughed unnecessarily, or blinked too hard—*walking dog, pushing stroller, taking a leak*. But the act of documenting my habits revealed their hiding place. We can be at our most stressed-out during moments of alleged calm, when our anxiety floats toward catastrophe and our emotions give way to an urge. "Anticipate those urges," then walk away or close your eyes, Sugar told me. "Just don't pee all over the toilet or anything."

Which I did, several times. And my diary proved that the moments I was blinking most often were . . . when I was typing up the diary. So Sugar helped me employ a different set of three letters: CBT, for *cognitive* behavioral therapy, emphasizing not so much long-term self-care as immediate, targeted tricks. She taught me to tolerate stress and create new mannerisms—you know, the opposite game. When I sensed a snort coming on, I breathed out of my mouth like Darth Vader at a yoga class. An *ahem* erupted; I swallowed my spit instead. As with any intensive regimen, behavioral reps pay off: Five weeks into my therapeutic pupu platter, I was picking up dog shit each morning with one eye open while exhaling through my dad-bod belly instead of my snout. The tic wasn't totally gone, but in my radicalized mind, I knew it never could be.

THERAPIST NO. 4:

FIGHT CLUB FOR YOUR MIND

I HAD PLENTY of sessions with Sugar ahead, one-on-one, but I kinda missed those reunion Zooms of the early pandemic—fraternities, aunties, *Hamilton*—when we could swap solitude for solace, personal anxiety for an orchestra of it. And I *did* have an hour and a half free on Thursdays. So I signed up for eight weeks of the DBT self-help group that was recommended by my shrink, at the Center for Anxiety in New York City, with eight total strangers.

The first rule of Group was you *must* show up for Group. The second rule of Group was . . . you do *not* log out of Group. The cheerleader of a host shared TED Talks on his screen, then asked if everyone was ready to use their "wise mind." Crickets. Sitting through this Zoom made me nod off faster than watching bad golf on TV. But there was real talk

amid the woo-woo, and in the fourth week, a woman in the top-left box of our Group grid explained that she *had* been worried about the primal, hunter-gatherer fear of becoming ostracized from friend groups, so she'd brazenly been more vocal than the rest of us. I unmuted myself and confessed that, in a pandemicized panic, I'd straight-up forgotten how to make friends in the first place.

That week at daycare drop-off, I admitted to Group, a cool new dad had introduced himself; I'd disguised my eye convulsion behind a pair of Ray-Bans, fogged up my mask, and airballed a fist bump. This was not merely anxiety, which my longtime analyst had originally identified as the source of the tic. This was shame, explained our Group leader—the urge may be to hide, but the opposite game says to let your secret out. I began to speak about my tic freely in and out of Group, like Ed Norton in *Fight Club* crying into Meat Loaf's man boobs. I'd thought I craved company, but what I truly needed was feedback—not a couch but a springboard.

"No type of therapy is going to make the pandemic go away," Marcia Kimeldorf, Ph.D., director of clinical services at the Center for Anxiety, reminded me. "Everybody's freaking out. So to be able to have that group is a lifeline—and it's based on learning tools and skills, not telling us your deepest, darkest secrets or the way your mom treated you as a kid."

THERAPIST NO. 5:

ACRONYM OVERLOAD

DESPITE OCCASIONALLY tripping over the dog leash with my eyes closed, I was virtually blink-free seven weeks into this self-induced therapy binge. But the stress behind the tic had only advanced: Two daughters were indeed a handful, tuition was getting expensive, and now my wife's dad was in the hospital. Group had equipped me with general brain hacks and YouTube bookmarks, but between the morning meditation, a different doc every other day, and my *actual* personal trainer, I hadn't found much time for Group's homework.

My fellow Groupers and I had relied upon a spiral-bound textbook by Linehan, the OG of DBT, which made for a decent coaster. Flipping through *DBT Skills Training* one night during a blowout in the NBA playoffs, though, I realized these tear-away handouts contained multitudes of free mindfulness. I scanned the index for acronyms: ABC stood for Accumulate positive emotions, Build mastery, and Cope ahead of time—not easy. Habit reversal therapy (HRT) had me turning up my palms, prayerlike, in a drill designed for people who pull out their hair. And then there was the STOP method: Stop, as in freeze; Take a step back; Observe how your body is clenched; and Proceed mindfully, knowing that you are *not* gonna make it to daycare on time with that new kid.

As with any good wine list, however, there is such a thing as too much tasting. Brain-hack memorization only added to my general anxiety. The *ahem*s returned, and my mental-health calendar left too little room for after-school parenting. But a friend recommended the startup Minded, which connected me to a guy on Zoom who could efficiently prescribe my meds for $60 a month. "Like Netflix," he said. And I'd come to appreciate that Therapist No. 1 had, for an hour every week, been making me do all the talking, without any of the teaching, all along.

At the conclusion of my two-month exercise, I dumped both my analyst of six years and the psychiatrist who'd recommended her own competition in the first place. I continued with Sugar for the tic but considered how to spend the out-of-network savings elsewhere. Art therapy, maybe. I'd heard they were taking patients in the metaverse.

But my eyes were open. I had become a radical. Now every Saturday could be Opposite Day. So I got back out there, to the true rager that is a four-year-old's birthday party. I gathered myself for ten seconds at the door, in a state of fatherly Zen, and immediately lost my older daughter, only to find myself surrounded by four stranger dads. One of their aging parents was in the hospital as well. Two of them were solo parenting for the weekend. Another was new in town. With each piñata crack of awkwardness, our pandemic PTSD let loose a little more. We had become therapists for ourselves, then for one another. I took off my sunglasses and jumped into the bouncy castle. ■

TEN-SECOND TRICKS TO HACK YOUR ANXIETY

YOUR BAD HABIT MIGHT BE drinking, eating, and/or shopping too much, or a tic like mine, or some other urge that doesn't enhance your life. But the skills I learned can help you accept those impulses and redirect them. "Mindfulness is just like a biceps curl: It takes a lot of repetition to get strong," says Marcia Kimeldorf, Ph.D., of the Center for Anxiety. Like so. **—M.S.**

1

URGE-SURF

If you can sense the looming wave of a drink you don't need or a fight you don't have to pick, close your eyes, then rock side to side and up and down, from your toes to your heels.

2

FLIP YOUR PALMS

Stress often leaves the remnants of hunched backs and clenched fists. Place the backs of your hands on a desk; it'll feel like inserting a battery pack into your spine.

3

HUG A TREE

Literally. Or at least lean on one. Easier than a hike, and it counts as engaging with nature while activating your "wise mind" between reason and emotion.

4

PEOPLE-WATCH

While you're at the park, find a bench and create your own fan fiction for each passerby. Narrating in the moment lets you see beyond yourself.

READY FOR YOUR MIDLIFE CRISIS? AWAKENING?

Harness the self-awareness that builds over 20 to 30 years of adulting to move yourself forward in work, life, and relationships.

BY MICHAEL CLINTON

I DON'T BELIEVE IN the idea of a midlife crisis. Instead, let's call it a midlife awakening.

That moment in your life when you might feel stuck and question some big issues, like: Am I in the right profession or did I get derailed from my purpose? Has my grip on my fitness and my health loosened? Am I happy with my family life? Sure, it's sobering, but also exhilarating.

After 30 years in the publishing business, I felt stuck. I came to the realization that I had accomplished all that I could. As I stepped back to assess the situation, what I recognized was that the digital revolution was coming fast and all those zeros and ones would disrupt my world in a big way. Rather than quit, I decided to dive in headfirst to try to understand this fast-evolving digital space. It gave me a whole new impetus moving me out of the inertia that had trapped me. Sometimes we just have to look around ourselves to discover how to reboot.

It takes time to get *unstuck*. For my book *ROAR Into the Second Half of Your Life (Before It's Too Late),* I interviewed more than 40 individuals—reimagineers—who'd all made meaningful changes at midlife. What they had in common was that they did the work to go deep inside themselves to understand what was bothering them so they could figure out how to escape. Most of them reported that it took a year or more to find their solution. These are some of the mental tools that helped me (and the reimagineers) get unstuck.

1 DO A SKILLS AUDIT

IF YOU ARE in business, you know about the SWOT analysis. SWOT stands for *strengths, weaknesses, opportunities,* and *threats.* Do your own SWOT analysis: Write down your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. While I am proficient at reading financial statements, I know I'm not great at math. As a result, I steer away from projects that require deep number skills. However, I'm strong at identifying market trends. If your company is going through a reorganization, that might give you an opportunity to present your accomplishments. As for threats, are you happy with your health and weight? There are also digital tools, at sites like UnderstandMyself.com and RichardStep.com, that can help you identify your best traits. Some of them may validate what you already know, but you may also uncover hidden talents and skills.

2 TAP YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS

BRACE YOURSELF—this next task may make you feel vulnerable because it explores whether how you see yourself is similar to how other people see you. Write down the five words that you think best describe you. Then ask ten of your closest family members and friends to give you five words that they would use to describe you. Take those 50 words and look for the ones that show up most often. Are they on your own list of five? When I did this, the top word that came from my squad was *generous*. It's a self-identifier for me, so it validated how I view myself. Now begin to mine your top words. How do you turn them into action? It will give you the fuel to move from being stuck to deciding what's next. For me, it included launching a foundation that was based in generosity, as well as getting involved with philanthropy, mentoring, and several nonprofits. While I didn't ask everyone to give me five negative things, that's a good exercise, too. I would have to include impatient, rigid at times, and possessive. Having insights on how to move forward from those traits has also helped me get unstuck, particularly in my personal relationships.

3 PICTURE IT, PLAN IT, DO IT

MY GRANDMOTHER always taught me to dream big and envision what I wanted my life to look like in the future. If you don't know what you want and who you want to be, how can you get there?

Every January, I create my yearlong journal plan, identifying what I hope to accomplish that year across all of life's areas. You can do it anytime, but by thinking about the next 12 months, you're giving yourself a chance to focus on long-term plans when so often we're just looking at our smartphone screens and thinking about the next five minutes. My 12-month plan includes relationships,

career, health and fitness, passions, and more. This "vision board" also includes pictures, inspirational ideas, and even phrases. Earlier in my adult life, I was a marathon runner but ultimately switched to triathlons. What I realized one year was that I felt stuck in my fitness regimen. I missed the simple pleasure of long-distance running. In my mid-50s, I returned to marathoning! Running puts me in a Zen state, a sort of moving meditation that allows me to get rid of my anxieties, sort out problems, and find clarity on what's important to me. At ten miles, the endorphins are working big-time and my mind and body are in lockstep. I make most of my big life decisions during a run. Figure out what physical activities work for you and use them to help you get unstuck with whatever issue you face.

4 EXCAVATE YOUR YOUNGER SELF

JOURNEYING BACK to my younger self to find direction for my future path has really helped me.

What did you leave behind that brought you joy and excitement? We all know the story of the person who wanted to be an archaeologist but became an accountant because it was the more practical choice. How do you reengage with your younger self and reclaim what turned you on? Spend the time to find at least one thing that you gave up and dedicate yourself to embracing it again. I began my career as a journalist but moved to the business side of publishing, where the compensation was better. In my 50s, I started writing again. It made me realize how much I loved the process of sitting down to compose a story on a topic that interested me. It also stoked my inherent curiosity, which had led me to journalism in the first place. I plan to keep writing as my creative passion. What did you leave behind that you can go back to as a way to move yourself forward? ■

MICHAEL CLINTON is the founder of ROAR—Reimagine, Own Who You Are, Act on Your Plan, and Reassess Your Relationships, a book, website, and event series to help you thrive in the second half of your life.

Jason Raish (Murthy)

HOW I KEEP IT TOGETHER with VIVEK H. MURTHY



When your job is to help lead the nation's Covid-19 response and its health initiatives, finding time to catch a breath is an extreme sport. Surgeon General VIVEK H. MURTHY, M.D., has it covered. Here's how the 45-year-old husband and father of two keeps his cool through the madness.
—TAYLYN WASHINGTON-HARMON

6:00 A.M.

RISE AND SHRINE

Dr. Murthy wakes up and **starts the day with "some form of meditation, gratitude, or prayer,"** he says. Then it's on to email for any medical fires he needs to tend to, like rising Covid cases or other new disease outbreaks.

7:00 A.M.

BE DJ DAD

Every minute with his kids is precious, and Dr. Murthy says the time spent helping his four-year-old daughter and six-year-old son get ready for school "is really sacred. It's a time to just be with them and play DJ as I drive them to school."

8:00 A.M.

FIND THE MOMENTS

Staff meetings, media interviews, coordinating with White House and health officials, and more—"from morning to night, we're back-to-back," Dr. Murthy says. **"I try to use moments in between meetings to breathe and just be, even if it's just for ten to 15 seconds."**

5:30 P.M.

RIDE AND CONNECT

On the way home, Dr. Murthy talks with friends. **"One thing I realized the hard way is that if I'm not staying in close touch with my family and friends, I become unhappy and I burn out,"** he says. "I used to hold off on calling people, because I thought I needed more time to catch up with them. Now I call even if I have two or five minutes. It's better to have several short chats than to wait weeks or months for the long conversations to happen."

6:30 P.M.

DINE AND DISCONNECT

Dr. Murthy switches his phone's sound on, then **places it away from the table so he's reachable in an emergency but the phone isn't front and center.** Dinner is usually vegetable-forward dishes with lentils, rice, and kid-friendly noshes like corn and broccoli. "I don't want to give you the constant impression that we only eat healthy—my kids are always asking for ice cream," he says.

8:00 P.M.

SPIN BEDTIME STORIES

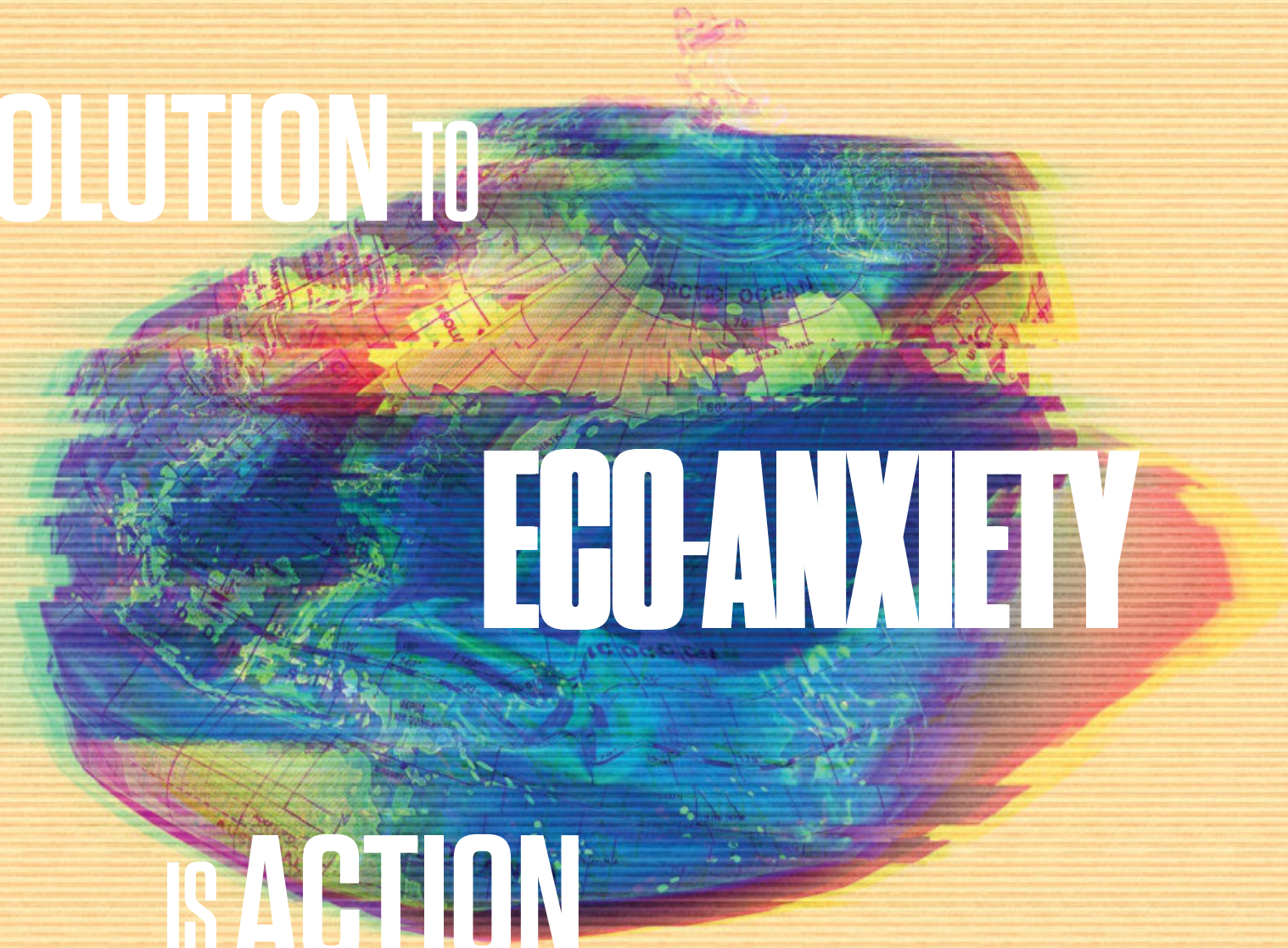
After dinner, Dr. Murthy gets the children ready for bed. **"I'm the designated storyteller in the family.** When I was a kid, I would make up bedtime stories and tell them to my older sister. That's what I'm doing now with my kids. Sometimes the characters have magic powers, sometimes they're regular people like us, but my kids really love these, and that's what we do."

10:30 P.M.

READ SOMETHING UPLIFTING

After reviewing his briefing book for the next day and checking in with public-health leaders, Dr. Murthy ends his day by reading. **"I try to read something uplifting or inspiring that doesn't have to do with work.** I have a bunch of writings from three heroes of mine—Nelson Mandela, MLK Jr., and Gandhi—and I read those. I love inspiring speeches—those are my go-tos."

THE SOLUTION TO ECO-ANXIETY IS ACTION



More Americans than ever fear that global warming will affect them personally. That's giving rise to a new field of study of what's called eco-anxiety—and a new sense of urgency to do something about it.

BY BEN COURT

DAVE FINOCCHIO, the cofounder of Bleacher Report, describes himself as fairly moderate politically and says he assumed climate change was something he wouldn't have to deal with in his lifetime. Finocchio, 39, lived in San Francisco when he sold Bleacher Report for $214 million in 2012, and soon afterward his attitude toward climate started to shift, as California wildfires caused an extended smoke season in the Bay Area.

It happened again in 2016 and in 2018, when Finocchio and his wife welcomed their first and second daughters onto the planet. "What was previously the nicest time of year was all of a sudden a new reality—living in smoke," he says. "It made climate change real for me in a different way to hurricanes in Florida. I started paying more attention to what was going on and listening to climate-technology podcasts like *My Climate Journey*." He expected it to be a chore but found the innovation and science around climate change fascinating. "There were all these interesting technologies that can transform our lives, but 95 percent of the climate content out there was aimed at an intellectual audience or was very doom-and-gloom, end-of-the-world-type stuff."

Finocchio's climate-change awakening mirrors what many feel: Sixty percent of American adults now say that they are concerned that global climate change will harm them *personally;* what's more, 74 percent of Americans are willing to make a lot of or some changes in their lifestyle to deal with climate change, according to data from the Pew Research Center. We're scared and want to do something.

Thomas Doherty, Psy.D., a psychologist based in Portland, Oregon, has been studying this phenomenon for more than a decade. He published a study in 2011 about the psychological impacts of climate change, including insomnia, anxiety, and depression. In a Zoom interview earlier this summer, Doherty wryly notes that this *isn't* the first time in history people have thought the world was going to end but adds that the flood of negative news

Getty

on social media about extreme storms, blistering heat waves, and species sliding into extinction makes this potential apocalypse seem more real.

Doherty says many of us feel like "climate hostages" because we don't have a lot of power to direct the government or corporations to address climate change, so it seems as though we're stuck on this planet spinning toward immolation. "This especially impacts American men because of our tradition of being self-reliant and rugged individualists," he says. "Dealing with this anxiety—literally the weight of the world on your shoulders—requires both vulnerability, being honest about your fears, and also figuring out how to sustain yourself." Doherty has various coping strategies (see "Sustainable Self-care," at right). The key is recognizing the opportunity to think about your environmental identity—the series of factors that inform your outlook on nature and sustainability—and adjusting your values accordingly.

Many people are doing just that. A record 49 percent of Gen Zers and 44 percent of millennials chose their preferred work or employers based on personal ethics, according to a recent survey from Deloitte, with climate change and protecting the environment as the top concerns of the youngest cohort. This is where Finocchio comes in: This past July, armed with the lessons of building Bleacher Report into a traffic juggernaut, he launched a website, an app, and a newsletter called *The Cool Down* with Ryan Alberti, 40, a Bleacher Report alum and a former Army Ranger.

Their mission statement reads: "*The Cool Down* encourages and empowers Americans to make transformative choices for themselves and their planet." Finocchio says the website will amplify the voices of emerging creators across unexpected categories—from finance and home improvement to cars and outdoor sports—with the ultimate goal of making climate content relatable, accessible, actionable, and engaging. They're not trying to green-shame or badger anyone into making sacrifices, but rather show people that climate may touch on the things they care about. There may be sustainable choices that make sense because they save money, boost health, or make you feel better, says Alberti. Just as Bleacher Report built an audience around sports teams, *The Cool Down* hopes to build content around climate topics.

Alberti, who spent a chunk of his 20s living a zero-carbon-footprint lifestyle, dumpster diving for food and walking everywhere, recognizes the importance of progress over perfection. "It's about finding a personal niche and contributing to the solution any way you can," he says. He notes that we live in a society that's increasingly oriented toward the idea of handing off hard or unpleasant tasks to someone else, tasks that might be as small as cutting the grass or as big as fighting a war. "I see that same dynamic at play in the context of climate action: 'This is an overwhelming topic, so I'm just going to let someone else worry about it.' I hope that *TCD* can be part of the solution by showing people all the various ways they can take action. Action is the ultimate antidote to anxiety." ■

Sustainable Self-care

Pioneering eco-anxiety psychologist Thomas Doherty, Psy.D., uses three strategies to help patients manage their roiling emotions about climate change.

1. Create Your NATURE TIMELINE

DOHERTY ASKS new patients to do a nature timeline as a way to explore their relationship with nature and better understand their environmental identity. Start at birth and go to the present, noting your significant experiences with nature. These can be as simple as taking stock of your pets, seasonal changes, activities you did in the outdoors, and travel experiences. Doing this can help ground you and establish your environmental identity, he says, so you're not just being pushed around by waves of bad climate news. Naturally, it also propels you to think of the future, what environmental experiences you want to have more of, and sustainability practices you may want to adopt.

2. Upgrade Your EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

WHEN A PATIENT is suffering eco-anxiety, Doherty gives them some homework: Scan a vocabulary list of words describing feelings and sensations on his blog (selfsustain.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Thomas-Doherty-PsyD-Feelings-Senations-Actions-List.pdf). Then highlight the words that resonate with your state of mind. The goal is to help guys identify and express their emotions in more precise ways. Everyone has emotional reactions, he says: You move toward things you like and away from things that are threatening. What you feel is the expression of your emotions, and the words you use, the language and vocabulary, can be expanded. That's emotional intelligence. Once you can better name your feelings, you can better control them.

3. Reroute Your ANXIETY LOOP

THE PLANETARY SCALE of the environmental crisis can be overwhelming and lead to an endless loop of anxiety. Doherty says sustainability starts with your self, and he uses "positivity bricks" to help patients build a stronger psychological foundation. He likens it to a pyramid and has patients identify eight to ten key bricks in the foundation, things like exercise, sleep, nutrition, family, and friends. Then he asks patients to focus on how they can strengthen those bricks and review their progress daily. Once you're managing the daily, he adds weekly and monthly layers of bricks like activities and longer-term goals. Often those involve a social element, like joining a recycling squad or a trail-cleanup group. Figuring out daily, weekly, monthly, and longer-term goals empowers you.



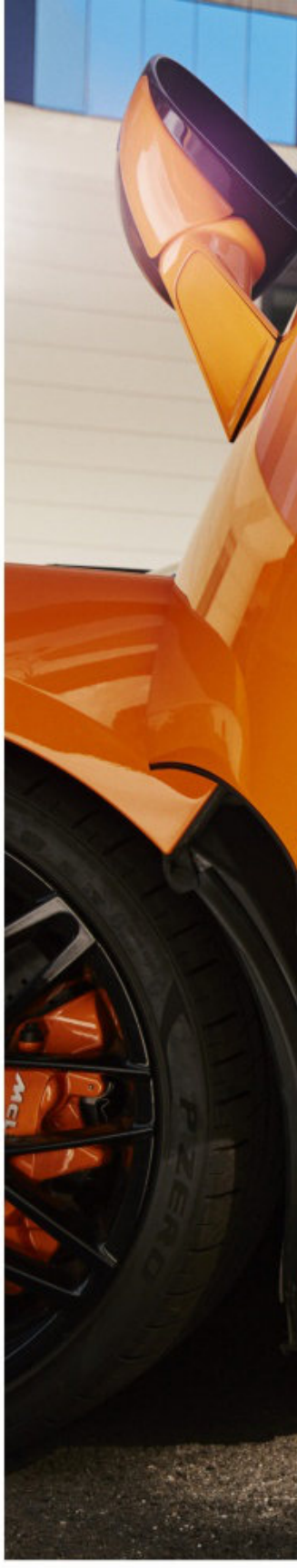


SHOW OF FORCE

With three major new projects and his own innovative production company, actor and activist JOHN BOYEGA is muscling way beyond *Star Wars*.

BY LOLA OGUNNAIKE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DANNY KASIRYE



HIGH IN THE manicured hills of Pomona, New York, a bucolic suburban town in a galaxy far, far away from bustling Manhattan, is where you'll find John Boyega quietly idling next to an infinity pool. For the better part of a five-hour photo shoot, Boyega has been "on," flexing his newly won biceps and striking poses with a billowing parachute. "I feel like I'm in an Adele video," he jokes at one moment, crooning "*Hellooo*" and serving up blue-steel gazes from the driver's seat of a Day-Glo-orange McLaren GT. When he's not dancing to Burna Boy, he's switching in and out of Gucci tank tops and gam-hugging hoochie-daddy shorts by Dior. He has indefatigable energy and is downright silly, which comes as a complete surprise to those of us who know him only from his sober turns in an epic franchise and several critically acclaimed indies. You would never guess that he's fresh off a flight from London, sleep-deprived and starving. In fact, when I ask him how he's feeling, he flashes the type of winning smile that makes knees buckle and hearts skip. "I feel sexy," he declares. "I can't lie. I feel very, very sexy."

Days later, when Boyega talks about the feel-good vibes he emanated on set, the 30-year-old grows philosophical. "You have two options as an artist," he says. "Fixate on your fatigue or acknowledge that you've arrived and express your extreme gratitude. When I was broke and no casting director wanted to see me, if someone said, 'We're going to fly you out tomorrow, take care of your hotel, shoot a *Men's Health* cover, then fly you back,' I would've cried with joy. Yeah, I just got off a flight, but that's what the rappers sing about. I'm living it."

These are indeed the moments Boyega, the British-born son of Nigerian immigrants, dreamed about as a lad in Peckham, a working-class community in London. Back then, he regularly practiced being late-night-show charming in his bathroom for future interviews, which helps explain why he's so affable when chatting about how this year promises to be a big one for him. He's part of a new wave of actors of African descent who are storming Hollywood—Daniel Kaluuya, Lupita Nyong'o, Chiwetel Ejiofor, and Damson Idris, to name a few. West African culture—Nollywood movies on Netflix and Afrobeat on the radio—is also enjoying an unprecedented level of visibility. Boyega has three major films hitting theaters in the coming months: *Breaking, The Woman King,* and *They Cloned Tyrone*. Then there's his work with his company, UpperRoom Productions, which has already inked development deals with Netflix and ViacomCBS.

Boyega's returning after an emotionally crippling rough patch in 2017 that found him contemplating quitting acting. No time off between back-to-back projects—*Star Wars: Episode VII, Pacific Rim: Uprising,* and the stage play *Woyzeck* (in which he played the title role)—left him feeling "exhausted, frantic, and paranoid," he says. "You're tired by your own dream, what you love." He took a hiatus to recharge and to work on building a better version of himself, one who was stronger physically, mentally, and spiritually and ready to embrace leading-man status and the high visibility that comes with it. During a break on set, he stands in front of a monitor and stares at images of himself in a yellow windbreaker. He's traded his signature cornrows for a clean fade, and the actor who was once described as "being built like a bullet" has leaned out considerably, as evidenced by his prominent cheekbones and sculpted frame. He's impressed. "That's real Black-boy joy," he says gleefully. "Black-boy joy!"

BOYEGA HASN'T always felt so great about his own body, he admits while on a road trip the day after the shoot. We're driving from New York City to test-drive the 1965 Chevrolet Corvette he's just purchased from Motorcar Classics in Farmingdale, on Long Island. He already owns a Lamborghini Urus that he keeps in London and a Jeep Wrangler Rubicon at his home in the Caribbean. His newest whip will stay in America.

Boyega is upbeat on this overcast day, as giddy as a kid on Christmas morning. He's in a sharing mood and riffs about his childhood. His family, whom he's always been extremely close to, grew up "without money." Peckham was filled with fast-food chains and liquor stores, and Boyega was "chunky as hell," he says. "Not *fat* fat, but I hated being topless because I had a little bit of a hanging belly. I gained weight in the most awkward of places while everybody was looking athletic, ripped, and lean."

Proud of his Nigerian heritage, the actor has an autobiographical sleeve tattoo on his left arm, beginning at his shoulder with an image of Africa (highlighting his homeland) and winding down to two beautifully rendered depictions of his parents just above his wrist. They immigrated to England in the 1980s. "My mom and dad will always be my heroes, because at the end of the day, man, they made the fundamental choice moving from Nigeria, coming over to London," he says. "If they didn't make that choice, I don't think any of us would be here."

Amid the elaborate ink tableau is an image of a lion that Boyega says represents his dueling spirits. "I like to fight and I like to cuddle," he says, before bursting into laughter. His father, Samson, a Pentecostal minister, and his mother, Abigail, a caregiver, have been married for 35 years, and he has two sisters, Grace and Blessing. They've championed his work ever since he



*Page 58: Tank by **Jockey;** cargo pants by **New Balance;** sneakers by **Converse.** This page: Shirt by **H&M;** track pants by **Tier;** sneakers by **Nike;** H08 watch by **Hermès;** 2022 McLaren GT by **McLaren Automotive.***

first appeared onstage in an update of the African folktale *Anansi the Spider* in primary school. "I used that as an opportunity to crack jokes and flirt with the girls—it was cool." He enjoyed the attention and the crowd's positive reception.

Soon Samson was taking his son, born John Adedayo Bamidele Adegboyega, to kiddie auditions at local performing-arts centers in London. In those formative years, Boyega learned to deliver Shakespearean monologues, tap-dance, and plié, and he perfected his American accent by studying rom-coms like *The Best Man* and Idris Elba's portrayal of Baltimore drug dealer Stringer Bell on *The Wire*. He honed his quick-wittedness at Westminster City School, a state-funded secondary academy for boys. "Every other morning, [classmates were] cussing the size of your head, the size of your ears. If you don't know how to snap back, you might end up in some sadness. You have to take a joke, too, know how to laugh at yourself and understand why people may be laughing at you, and then be like, 'You know what, if I wasn't me, I'd probably be laughing at this shit, too.' "

Femi Oguns, Boyega's drama teacher turned agent, first observed his talent at Identity School of Acting, an academy Oguns founded for talent from marginalized communities in 2003. Having worked with Boyega for more than a decade, he says, "It was very evident that he was somebody that had a maturity at a very young age but also had a wonderful openness to the craft. There's a truth that he brings to everything he does." Boyega is drawn to scripts that inspire a visceral reaction. He knows he's found the right one when his chest begins thumping and "I can visualize the film. The concept is clear; the intentions are clear. I'm going through each page and wishing I could read it in five seconds."

Director J. J. Abrams loved him enough as the precocious alien fighter in 2011's sci-fi comedy *Attack the Block* to cast him in his *Star Wars* update years later. Boyega—a huge *Star Wars* fan—auditioned for nearly a year before landing the part of Finn in Abrams's trilogy. It was a life-changing opportunity that would ultimately prove bittersweet. Yes, it made Boyega rich and gave him access to front-row seats at Burberry runway shows, but it also put him in the crosshairs of racist Internet trolls who could accept a world filled with Ewoks and Wookiees but couldn't fathom a stormtrooper of color.

The actress Moses Ingram, who stars on Disney+'s *Obi-Wan Kenobi* miniseries, recently endured a similar backlash, but she's been publicly supported by her castmates, and Lucasfilm execs were forthcoming about the online abuse she could face. Was Boyega similarly forewarned?



*Tank by **Adidas x Gucci;** shorts by **Dior Men;** sandals by **Aldo.***

Styling: Ted Stafford and Jason Rembert. Styling assistance: Daniel Lee Spellman. Hair: Johnny Cakes. Grooming: Jessica Smalls/the Wall Group. Prop styling: Michael Sturge-Jon/Monday Artists. Tailoring: Darlene Deandrade. Production: Area 1202.

"Hell no," he states. "I'm the one that brought this to the freaking forefront." He says he was blindsided by the racist vitriol hurled at him, and at times it made him question if he even wanted to be part of the sci-fi juggernaut. Boyega has consistently voiced his frustrations about how his character was underdeveloped and ultimately marginalized. He remains vocal about feeling unsupported in those days, which he hopes has compelled execs to become more accountable to actors of color. "At least the people going into it now, after my time, [they're] cool," he says. Lucasfilm is "going to make sure you're well supported and at least you [now] go through this franchise knowing that everybody is going to have [your] back. I'm glad I talked out everything at that time."

His sister Grace says he's been outspoken since childhood. "Whatever John believes in, he's going to stand by it." His speech at a Black Lives Matter rally in London in 2020 wasn't planned. That day, he and Grace had intended to quietly protest about the death of George Floyd. However, one of the march organizers handed the actor a megaphone and invited him to speak from his heart. He did. In his nearly five-minute monologue, he was angry, raw, and breathtakingly honest about the trials of being Black in a world that rates him as a second-class citizen. "I need you to understand how painful it is to be reminded every day that your race means nothing," Boyega declared in his speech, which immediately went viral and cemented him in the annals of activist artists.

"Any of us keeping our mouth shut at this point, it doesn't really feel too comfortable," he later tells me. "Because even if you're British, [you're] working in the States; the gun's going to go off before your accent does." His message for people still bothered by his bluntness and unapologetic embrace of the BLM movement? "Our empowerment is not your demise," he says. Did he experience any backlash? "Of course there's backlash. Seen and unseen," he says cryptically. "It's just how it goes. You'll see who's for you and who's really not. . . . [But] this is who I am. I'm going to speak about what I believe in and make sure that whatever I do is aimed at supporting the people."

Reaching this level of self-acceptance came at a cost for Boyega. "Ambition is my battery power," he tells me. At age 19, he decided he wanted seven figures in his bank account before age 25. "I was a millionaire by probably 22 or 23." He purchased a new home for his parents with one of his first big checks. But that ambition drove him to feel like he "had to say yes to everything" on his way up. "It's tiring and it's stress, and then dealing with the fact that you eventually have to perform," he says. "There are many different ways careers can exhaust you, but the artistic way is unique."

"I'M GOING TO SPEAK ABOUT WHAT I BELIEVE IN AND MAKE SURE THAT WHATEVER I DO IS AIMED AT SUPPORTING THE PEOPLE."

THE PHYSICAL part of Boyega's post–*Star Wars* rebuild involved working out for 90 minutes five or six days a week with London-based trainer Tim Blakeley. His fitness regimen, a mix of cardio, weight training, and yoga, is as effective as it is excruciating. "Leg day is the worst day," Boyega says. "All the training that I do is about detail, posture, and getting the most out of each rep." I ask if he listens to Cardi B, Megan Thee Stallion, and the other ratchet rappers who currently fuel my gym workouts. "I've got a confession," Boyega says, leaning in conspiratorially. "I rarely listen to music with lyrics in the gym. I listen to movie scores. . . . I love Hans Zimmer. I love Harry Gregson-Williams." Epic, orchestral soundtracks from films like *Gladiator, Inception,* and *The Dark Knight* are his go-tos. "It's harder to run on the treadmill when Drake is talking about being on the jet," he jokes. "The workouts I do [are] hard. I need me some motivation."

Of course, Boyega also reworked his diet. Ditching sugar was a "massive" game changer. "That's my enemy," he says. "Doughnuts, chocolate, candy, pie, sodas . . . the stuff that kills you. I had to get rid of that habit." His diet now consists of Grace's nutritious, home-cooked meals. Lots of lean chicken and brown jollof rice, a Nigerian dish made with tomato paste, onions, and spices.

Resetting mentally was perhaps the most difficult. Boyega tells me he found guidance from fellow franchise star Robert Downey Jr., who has struggled with his own challenges. "I am very interested in people who go to dark spaces and are able to flip that," he says. Downey told him, "They're not going to know what to do with you when you come into the industry; they're going to be like, 'Oh, let's just make him well-spoken and nice.' That's kind of the filter. You're going to go through some turbulence. You're going to try to find who you are within this. It might be rocky, but you'll come out the end with a solid identity. That's literally what happened to me," Boyega says.

He learned to surround himself with trusted friends and family. "You choose your circle in which you can accept how you express yourself. Once you feel that acceptance, they can help you, help motivate you. That's your safe place as a celebrity. So you can actually complain. I still want to say that shit. Like, this is petty, but I want to tell my sisters, 'Oh, this is just how I feel.' And they're going to be like, 'This is petty, but yeah, I hear you.' Whereas in the world it's going to be like, 'You're a fucking millionaire, you idiot. You know what I had to do this morning, and you're complaining about that?' Let me just chill and complain to the people that understand that I'm not trying to be evil. It's just today, I'm sad. I'm experiencing [this phase of my career] as a more balanced person who is willing to improve. I know it's a weird, random thing to say, but I'm willing to say sorry."

There are two main things that Boyega wanted to achieve upon entering the business. "To disrupt the industry and also to make history, and nothing has changed," says Oguns. "For John, it was never about trying to fit into the box. He wants to be the outline of the box." That's why Boyega has sidestepped playing enslaved people or drug dealers and appearing in clichéd sports movies, his agent explains: "For John, it's all about accountability. He doesn't want to be defined by any stereotypical roles." But there are rumors that Boyega has secretly joined the Marvel

Cinematic Universe. "That's not in the vision for me now," he says. "I want to do nuanced things. . . . I want to donate my services to original indie films that come with new, fresh ideas, because I know it's real hard to top *Iron Man* in that universe."

Boyega describes one of his upcoming films, *They Cloned Tyrone* (due later this year), as a "unique and strange story that blew me away." I admit that I'm confused by the film's premise and ask him to make it plain. He can't, really. "Pimp. Prostitute. Try to uncover a mystery in the 'hood. That's all I'm giving you," says Boyega, who plays multiple clones ranging in age from 28 to 78 and costars with Jamie Foxx, who, unsurprisingly, went a long way toward making it the most fun he's ever had on set. "We were filming all over Atlanta, so you can imagine the energy. We in the strip clubs, we in the streets," Boyega says. "It was a joy."

Flexing a different kind of dramatic muscle alongside Viola Davis in the historical thriller *The Woman King,* Boyega plays King Ghezo, a conflicted ruler in late-19th-century West Africa. Due in theaters on September 16, it tells the story of the Dahomey warriors, a fearless band of female fighters who battled European colonizers. When he's asked why he said yes to this project, Boyega's eyes light up. "The fact that I would be able to speak in my father's accent, in my native tongue, and portray something that's different from what I've done before, I was like, 'Yeah, I'm coming. I want to be a part of that big-time.' "

In his third major project of the year, *Breaking* (out August 26), Boyega stretches yet again. He shines as a diminished man abandoned by his country and fighting to maintain his dignity in the film—based on the true story of a Marine veteran whose PTSD leads him to stage a botched bank robbery. His performance is already being compared to Al Pacino's virtuosic turn in the 1970s classic *Dog Day Afternoon*.

The movie gave him an opportunity to act opposite one of the titans he used to watch on *The Wire*, Michael K. Williams, who plays a hostage negotiator. Working with Williams, who died of an accidental drug overdose in 2021, was "phenomenal," he says. "And when I met him, it was a full-circle moment for me." Williams gifted him a cologne from a small Black-owned business during their first days on set. "It's finishing, and I feel sad about it," he says. "I always say that Michael K. Williams is the nicest-smelling man in the industry. His smell is ridiculous."

During our nearly two-hour journey to the car dealership, Boyega has been amusing me with tales of his newly adopted roller-skating hobby—"I'm bloody freaking good. The way I turn these corners, it don't make no sense"—as well as his search for the perfect companion. His parents' long marriage and egalitarian partnership have been hugely inspirational. "My dad would plait my sisters' hair while my mom was cooking," he says. "They're inseparable at this point." He too wants a ride-or-die woman who's curious, quick to laugh, and spontaneous. And, he adds, grinning slyly, "I like them thick and brown."

Boyega and I have finally arrived at Motorcar Classics, where sleek rides lovingly restored to their youthful glory preen like pageant queens. We check out '70s Stingrays and tricked-out '80s Ferraris. Plus, of course, Boyega's Corvette, a silver beauty with sumptuous red-leather interior. But it's the Aston Martin, with its significant pedigree and the license plate JB 007, that causes the actor to stop in his tracks. Coincidence? Or could it be subtly announcing that he's appearing in another iconic franchise soon, trading lightsabers for shaken martinis, perhaps? No, Boyega says with a wishful glint in his eyes. "But you know if they give me *that* call, I'll be there." ■

LOLA OGUNNAIKE *has written about culture, art, and design for* The New York Times, Rolling Stone, *and* Architectural Digest.

RAPID FIRE

BOOK YOU'RE READING?
"*The Intelligent Investor,* by Benjamin Graham. No time for business school."

LAST TIME YOU CRIED?
"On the plane over, I watched [*Respect*]. It was the scene where [Aretha Franklin] was exhausted and said to her family, 'If I'm not good, y'all can't eat.' And their reaction was like, no. They covered her basically."

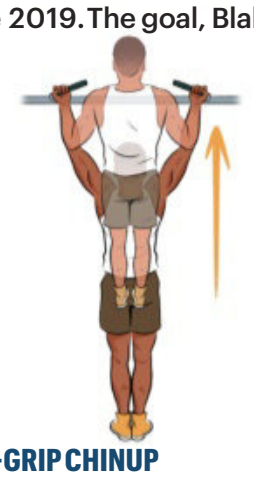
TV SERIES YOU'RE INTO?
"*Moon Knight.* My boy Oscar [Isaac]'s got a British accent in it. He's quite all right, know what I mean?"

MEAL YOU COOK TO IMPRESS?
"I've only cooked one meal like that, and it was pasta Bolognese, garlic bread, and a Greek salad. I went on YouTube and asked my sister for recipe tips."

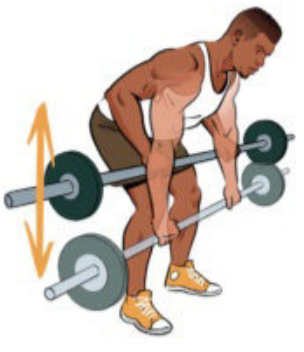
EUPHEMISM FOR SEX?
"I don't have one. Sex."

BUILD A BOYEGA BACK

WHETHER HE'S PREPPING for a role or not, **John Boyega** hits the gym at least five days a week with trainer Tim Blakeley, who's worked with him since 2019. The goal, Blakeley says, is to avoid having to "cram" training just before a film. It's paid off for Boyega, who's built serious muscle.



WIDE-GRIP CHINUP
▶ Hang from a bar with an underhand grip, hands wider than shoulder width. Pull your chest to the bar. Lower. That's 1 rep; do 3 sets of as many good-form reps as you can.



BARBELL BENT-OVER ROW
▶ Hold a barbell with an overhand grip, then push your butt back and lower your torso so it's at a 45 degree angle. Pull the bar to your ribs; lower with control. That's 1 rep; do 3 sets of 8 to 12.



NARROW-GRIP PULLDOWN
▶ Sit at a lat-pulldown machine and grasp a V-shaped handle. Squeeze your shoulder blades and pull the bar to your chest. Pause, then return to the start. That's 1 rep; do 3 sets of 8 to 12.

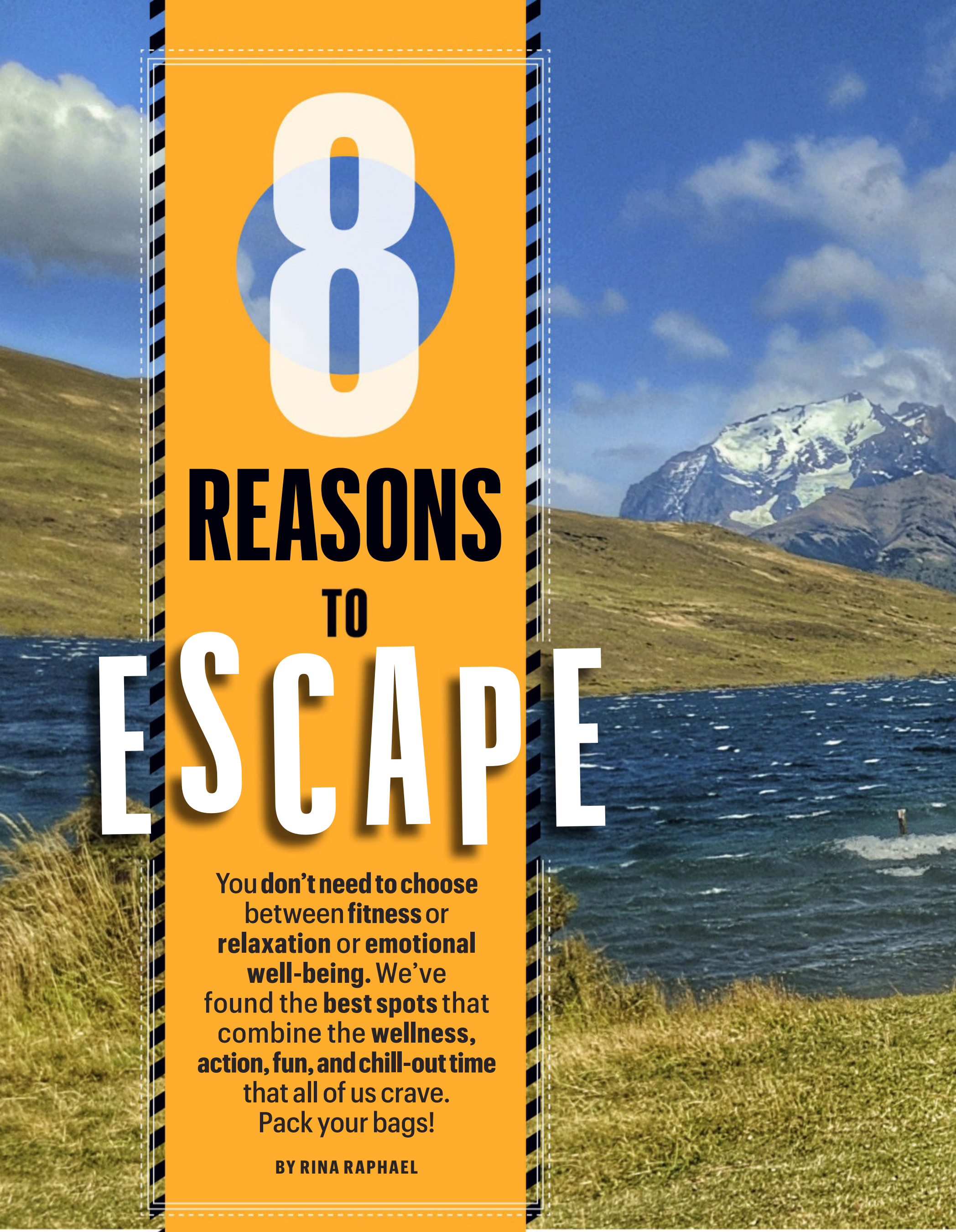


SINGLE-ARM DUMBBELL ROW
▶ Start with a dumbbell in your right hand hanging down and your torso nearly parallel to the floor. Row the dumbbell to your right hip; lower. That's 1 rep; do 3 sets of 8 to 12 per side.

Ben Mounsey-Wood (illustrations)



*Track jacket by **Telfar;** tank by **Jockey;** cargo pants by **New Balance;** sneakers by **Converse;** H08 watch by **Hermès.***



8 REASONS TO ESCAPE

You **don't need to choose** between **fitness** or **relaxation** or **emotional well-being.** We've found the **best spots** that combine the **wellness, action, fun, and chill-out time** that all of us crave. Pack your bags!

BY RINA RAPHAEL

WORK HARD, RECOVER HARDER

Fast-track your fitness at these sweaty getaways that serve up specialized training, wild adventure, and intense recovery.

#1

ROGUE EXPEDITIONS

WHAT: It's a roving retreat for runners of all levels, with trips in places like Patagonia, Oregon, and British Columbia. **TYPICAL DAY:** In Oregon, you'll run six to 12 miles over single-track trails through Douglas-fir forests and past waterfalls. **TIP:** Focus on efforts, not paces, says cofounder and elite runner Allison Macsas. "Navigating roots, rocks, and steep climbs takes practice. Ignore the numbers on your watch and concentrate on each step. Stay relaxed for the first half so you can finish strong." **FUEL:** Frittata brunches overlooking thousand-foot cliffs, picnics alongside pristine rivers, and dinners cooked over campfires. **RECOVER:** Relax by floating down lazy rivers. **COST:** About $2,600 for five nights; roguexpeditions.com

LEARN TO LISTEN TO YOUR BODY BETTER

▶ SURF YOGA BEER

WHAT: Created by SoulCycle instructor Mantas Zvinas, this pop-up retreat celebrates his passions—surfing, yoga, and, yup, beer—in hidden spots in Nicaragua, Morocco, and Mexico. **TYPICAL DAY:** At Playa Maderas in Nicaragua, schedules are based on the waves but usually feature surf lessons, fitness classes, yoga, and snorkeling. **TIP:** Single-leg yoga poses can fine-tune your balance, says Zvinas. "Try the Superman pose to strengthen your core and lower back muscles," he adds. It mimics many movements in the water: Drop down onto your stomach, lift both legs and arms to assume a flying position, then move one arm at a time as though you're paddling on a board. Continue for 20 seconds for each set. **FUEL:** Local and fresh fish tacos washed down with fruit smoothies. **RECOVER:** Dance on the beach and drink ice-cold local Toña lager. **COST:** Five-night getaways start at $1,950; surfyogabeer.com

▶ MOVNAT—NATURAL MOVEMENT

WHAT: The three-day, eight-person, men-only fitness camps take place in wilderness locations, where you learn to lift explosively, move with greater agility, and sleep outdoors. (Bring a blanket or a sleeping bag.) **TYPICAL DAY:** In Embudo, New Mexico, at MovNat Crucible, led by Vic Verdier, C.S.C.S., a former French naval officer and wilderness EMT, you'll lift logs, climb trees, carry rocks, and take on other challenges that push you out of your comfort zone. **TIP:** "Sprinting is a great way to build explosiveness and mobility," says Verdier. "A safe way to begin is to sprint uphill. It will self-limit your sprint in order to avoid any injury." Sprint for 10 to 20 yards and take as long as you want to recover. Do 10 reps. **FUEL:** Very little water and almost no food. **RECOVER:** You'll be fried. Sleep, sleep, sleep. **COST:** $800 for three nights; movnat.com



A workout at Surf Yoga Beer in Nicaragua.

Pages 66-67: Gabe Steger. This page: Courtesy Surf Yoga Beer.



Zip-lining at the adventure park next to Sensei Lanai.

At Sensei Lanai, a Four Seasons Resort, MH*'s fitness director, EBENEZER SAMUEL, C.S.C.S., reboots his mind and body in ways he didn't even realize he needed.*

IT'S JUST HOURS into my first day at Sensei, and I'm already working out. Well, sort of. I'm jumping straight up as trainer Kyle Silvey, C.S.C.S., studies my vertical. Silvey is my guide on this trip to Sensei, a new wellness resort created by Oracle founder Larry Ellison and David Agus, M.D., founding director of USC's Institute for Transformative Medicine.

Together, they built a 24-acre compound on a small island in Hawaii. The tranquil, no-kids-under-16 resort has trails through a forest of Cook pines, private spa areas, open spaces for horseback riding and archery, and an adventure course where you can zip-line through the jungle. It's also home to Sensei's Optimal Wellbeing Program, which aims to deliver personalized insights to me in four key areas: fitness, nutrition, mental health, and breathing.

I'm here for a five-day mind-body reset. The go-go stress of New York City has me frazzled, and I want better tools to manage that. As my tiny vertical leap attests, my workouts need an infusion of athletic moves. Fourteen days before my flight, I'd completed a questionnaire about long-term wellness goals and linked my Whoop 4.0 fitness tracker to Sensei's portal so that Silvey could scrutinize my metrics. Sensei built my itinerary using that information and set out to guide me to wellness gains. I was skeptical, but my Whoop data revealed that I was overtraining, and the blue sky—and ocean—provided an inspiring backdrop for new thinking.

BREATHING: KEEP IT SIMPLE

When I meet with mindset guide Marcus Washington, the last thing I want is another complicated breathing technique. Washington sticks to the basics. He has me choose either four-second inhales and exhales or six-second inhales and exhales. All I have to do is maintain one technique for two minutes. I appreciate the simplicity of deep breathing, especially when Washington shows me how it affects my heart-rate variability. A high HRV signals that your body is ready for action. Washington connects me to a real-time HRV tracker, and I watch as it rises during this drill. I now breathe like this for two minutes pre-workout.

NUTRITION: OATMEAL UP

On my second day, I sit down with registered dietitian Marlee Finkelstein, who walks me through the results of a blood-panel test and analyzes my diet. I mention to her that my muscles haven't looked as full in recent months, and she pinpoints the problem: My high-protein diet lacks carbs. The fix: a cup of oatmeal with brown sugar every morning, a snack that I add to my rotation.

MEDITATION: ENJOY THE NOISE

New York City leaves little room to contemplate silence, so meditation expert Nico Akiba proposes I try listening intently to any and all sounds around me for 90 seconds. Instead of cutting myself off from the world, I'm learning to focus and choose what I hear. Months later, I do this often, whenever I need to collect myself.

FITNESS: CONTRAST IT

On the last day of my trip, Silvey suggests a solution to my lack of explosiveness—contrast training. We do four reps of heavy Romanian deadlifts, then immediately do four vertical jumps. The heavy move recruits an abundance of muscle fibers, he says, prepping my body to jump higher. We do five sets, resting two minutes between them.

Five weeks later, when Silvey checks in with me (your guide stays in contact with you for several months), I tell him I feel more explosive, thanks to twice-a-week contrast sessions. With the help of breathing drills to control my HRV, I'm finally logging high Whoop recovery scores again. Sensei's guides gave me the lessons I needed—and listening to the rhythmic sound of crashing waves didn't hurt, either. *From $1,355 per night; sensei.com*

Robb Aaron Gordon

3 RE-WILD AND TAP INTO THE POWER OF NATURE

IN CALIFORNIA, 45 minutes south of San Francisco, **Canyon Ranch Woodside**'s redwood-canopied retreat inspires a connection to nature. Sleep in a glass-clad tree house with a deck, run creekside stairs during outdoor group workouts, hike to the oldest and largest living tree on the peninsula, and exhale on guided forest meditations. You'll unwind with calming evening yoga or workshops like drawing and origami. ***From $1,325 per person, all-inclusive; canyonranch.com***

IN COSTA RICA, at the brand-new **Hacienda AltaGracia** from Auberge Resorts—encompassing 180 acres of rain forest—tranquility comes in the form of hikes to bird sanctuaries and waterfalls. Need a bit more adventure? Explore the nearby hills and coffee plantations on horseback. There's also a six-hour high-altitude mountain hike, tree climbing (where you can abseil back to the forest floor), and surfing in the nearby town of Uvita. ***$1,550 per night, all-inclusive; aubergeresorts.com/altagracia***

IN BRITISH COLUMBIA, hiking is the attraction at **Mountain Trek Fitness Retreat and Health Spa,** cocooned in the rugged Canadian Rockies. Start your day with yoga and a smoothie before hiking the peaks, increasing in intensity each day. Highlights include millennia-old glaciers, raging rivers, and turquoise lakes. Back at the lodge, recuperate in an ice-cold plunge pool or an outdoor Jacuzzi overlooking Kootenay Lake, detox in a sauna, and recover with a massage. ***$6,100 for one week, all-inclusive; mountaintrek.com***

IN ALASKA, at the nine-cabin **Stillpoint Lodge** on Kenai Peninsula, the emphasis is on wildlife and wellness. Hike or kayak to spot bears, bald eagles, orcas, and otters, then practice mindfulness with yoga and meditation sessions. Much of the menu is grown or caught locally. The lodge sits on Halibut Cove, which is also home to king salmon and Pacific cod, and its gardens produce greens, root vegetables, and berries. Unlike at many retreats, kids ages six and up are welcome. Activities include fishing, interpretive hikes, and tide-pool expeditions. ***Three-night nature and nurture packages from $8,250; stillpointlodge.com***



Exploring the trails at Hacienda AltaGracia from Auberge Resorts, Costa Rica.

Auberge Resorts Collection



Underwater XPT drills in Malibu.

4 TRAIN WITH YOUR FAVORITE FITFLUENCER

WORK OUT WITH LAIRD HAMILTON

Join the legendary surfer in Malibu or Costa Rica and be immersed in his XPT training method, which emphasizes strengthening what he calls "the whole organism," aka your mind and body. Expect intense underwater workouts, ice-tub sessions, and lots and lots of breathwork (Costa Rica, October 11–13). **$6,500; shop.xptlife.com**

LIFT HEAVY WITH DON SALADINO

The celeb trainer's annual retreat, Don Con, is a six-day fitnessfest on a private island off Puerto Vallarta. Saladino uses the intimate setting to teach advanced muscle-building techniques, workshops on form, and key moves to get those superhero abs and arms. **From $1,750; donsaladino.com**

DO YOGA AND FITNESS WITH BRITNEY SHINE

At this four-day December yoga and fitness adventure retreat in Scottsdale, Arizona, you'll take two classes a day with the yoga luminary and Sui Yoga NYC instructor, doing everything from HIIT to handstand workshops. Chase that with a desert hike or horse ride. **From $1,775; ketangafitness.com**

5 COOK & EAT LIKE A KING

NESTLED IN THE Great Smoky Mountains in Walland, Tennessee, luxe retreat **Blackberry Farm** now has **Wellhouse**, a full-service spa. Join a chef and learn to cook dishes like shaved fennel and rhubarb salad and seared salmon with grilled shishito peppers. Best of all, you get to eat the meal paired with wines from the 160,000-bottle cellar. *From $845 per night; blackberryfarm.com*

6 DABBLE IN SILENT MODE

GET BACK ON TRACK with the ultimate me time: a silent retreat to reflect and recharge. "People often tell me they get more done in the week after a silent retreat than they got done the month before," says senior instructor John Osborne at the ART OF LIVING RETREAT CENTER in North Carolina. Choose how much silence you're after; each retreat can be customized. (Chatting by the campfire is permitted.) Activities include nature walks, pottery, and yoga. *$1,295 for four nights; artoflivingretreatcenter.org*



Courtesy XPT Fitness (XPT). Courtesy Art of Living Retreat Center (Art of Living).

RECONNECT WITH YOUR SELF

At the new Miraval Berkshires Resort & Spa, BEN COURT tries to exorcise trauma, takes a smoothie workshop, and seeks emotional-intelligence tips from a horse.

I'M MAKING my best cowboy clicking sounds and staring at Maple, urging the 800-plus-pound, 15-year-old chestnut Missouri Fox Trotter to walk toward me. Maple is my equine partner in this nonverbal-communication exercise. The goal is for me to lead her, showing her where to move in a collaborative dance of space. She is not budging. Horses don't respond to auditory cues or eye contact, says animal-connections specialist Jen Leahey, call sign NATURE. (All instructors here wear a name tag with a word that characterizes their true essence.) Horses communicate using energy and touch and are all about being emotionally present. They also see the world in the soft gaze, favored by expert meditators. First, I need to connect with Maple by petting her with long, firm strokes, "like a mare licking a foal." Then I need to project where I want her to move and trust she will go there. Our dance is more of a shuffle—I walk to where I want Maple to go, and she follows, sometimes quickly and other times slowly—but soon we're grooving.

By connecting with Maple, I'm also connecting with myself. Before arriving at Miraval Berkshires in western Massachusetts, I had a consultation about "the intention for my journey" and identified a word to guide me. Mine is *connect,* with my partner as well as myself. We're working parents, with a two-year-old and a tween, and after two years of cooped-up pandemic living, we wanted—okay, needed—some intense self-care and uninterrupted together time. Miraval is seeing more people like me, says Simon Marxer, associate vice president of spa and well-being, "guys who are seeking a personal experience, some dimension of transformation, and a sense of inspiration, versus simply seeking relaxation." The experiences menu glows with



The new Challenge Course at Miraval Berkshires.

Courtesy Miraval Berkshires

wellness options, everything from paddleboard yoga and adventure-course exercises to forest bathing and aura imaging. Along with dancing with Maple, three other experiences stood out.

USE EXERCISE TO EXORCISE STRESS

In the 80-minute session called Tension Release Exercises, spiritual coach Mark Gerow, call sign RESILIENCE, explores how your muscles can store trauma and stress and guides you to release both. We target the psoas, the girdle of muscle that runs from your lumbar spine to your hips, by doing a series of exercises that fatigue the muscles around it. Then I lie down with my knees apart but the soles of my feet together, inhale and exhale deeply, bring my knees closer together, and . . . wait. I didn't expect anything to happen, but after several minutes, my hips start to quiver. RESILIENCE explains that this is normal and that my body is releasing stress. It's deeply unnerving as the shaking and fluttering come in unpredictable waves. I imagine traumatic memories leaving my body like Slimer & Co. being zapped in *Ghostbusters*. It's that weird and goes on for about 30 minutes. Afterward, I feel profoundly relaxed. RESILIENCE says it's a therapy that can be used to treat back pain, anxiety, and even migraines.

SEED A BETTER SMOOTHIE

Miraval Berkshires offers culinary and nutrition classes on everything from knife skills to kombucha brewing. In Blend 'N' Balance Smoothies, a 45-minute workshop led by program chef Beatrice Blais, aka JOYFUL, I learn to make three classic smoothies—chocolate/peanut butter/banana protein, berry antioxidant, and power greens—even more nutritious and tasty. My favorite is the berry smoothie that JOYFUL says doubles as a hangover cure and digestion aid—the chia seeds help scrub gunk from your gut.

BERRY ANTIOXIDANT

In a blender, mix 2 cups **mixed berries,** ¼ cup **chia seeds,** ¼ cup **rolled oats,** 1 **apple,** juice from ½ **lemon,** 1 tsp **cinnamon,** and 16 oz **coconut water.** *Serves 2*

STRETCH A SMILE UPON YOUR FACE

"Be kind; be compassionate to your body," says fitness specialist Tariq Pinkston, aka EMPATHY. In his Happy Hips class, we're spending 45 minutes doing gentle yoga-inspired moves to open up the hips and improve mobility. I now do three of them once a week as a hips circuit:

1. Foam-roll: Quads—front and back—and glutes.
2. Raises: Lying on your side, raise your top leg for 5 reps, circle it for 5 reps, and pulse for 5 reps. Switch sides and repeat. Do 3 rounds per side.
3. Openers: Lying on your back with your legs straight, take your right foot and draw a semicircle toward your butt. Repeat 5 times, then circle the other way. Switch sides and repeat. Do 3 rounds per side.

The totality of those experiences, plus the mindful vibe of the resort—with downtime by the pool, hikes in the forest, tasty local food (think grass-fed filet, broccolini, aubergine puree, and beef jus), and healthy-ish cocktails (mescal, pomegranate liqueur, ancho-chile liqueur, and lime juice)—helped shift our world into a softer, kinder focus. Maple would approve. *From $899, all-inclusive; miravalberkshires.com*

8 EXPAND YOUR MIND

WHILE BUDDING research—and centuries of practice in various cultures—attests to the potential therapeutic benefits of psychedelics, you can test them out for yourself at international retreats (until they're fully available in the U. S.). At the Costa Rican seaside jungle retreat **Soltara Healing Center,** Peruvian Shipibo healers work with the therapeutic plant ayahuasca to focus on whatever guests need, be it spiritual healing or creative expression. Baths and pre-ceremony yoga ensure the experience is as relaxing as it is transformative. ***From $1,875 for a five-night retreat; soltara.co***

RINA RAPHAEL *is based in Los Angeles and is the author of* The Gospel of Wellness: Gyms, Gurus, Goop, and the False Promise of Self-Care.

SALADS, EXCEPT ACTUALLY AWESOME!

Great chefs all over the country are finally giving greens the attention and deliciousness they deserve. These four salads will completely change how you eat your vegetables—just in time for peak-season produce. Grab a fork.

By Todd Kliman

Photographs by Paola + Murray



FARM LETTUCE SALAD

THE LESSON: Croutons don't own crunch.

Yes, the paper-thin squash, salty cheese, and tangy lemon dressing make this salad incredible. But don't discount the pistachios, which do way more for texture (not to mention heart-healthy fats) than croutons ever could. ***—Recipe by Michael Paley, chef/owner of Amara at Paraiso in Miami***

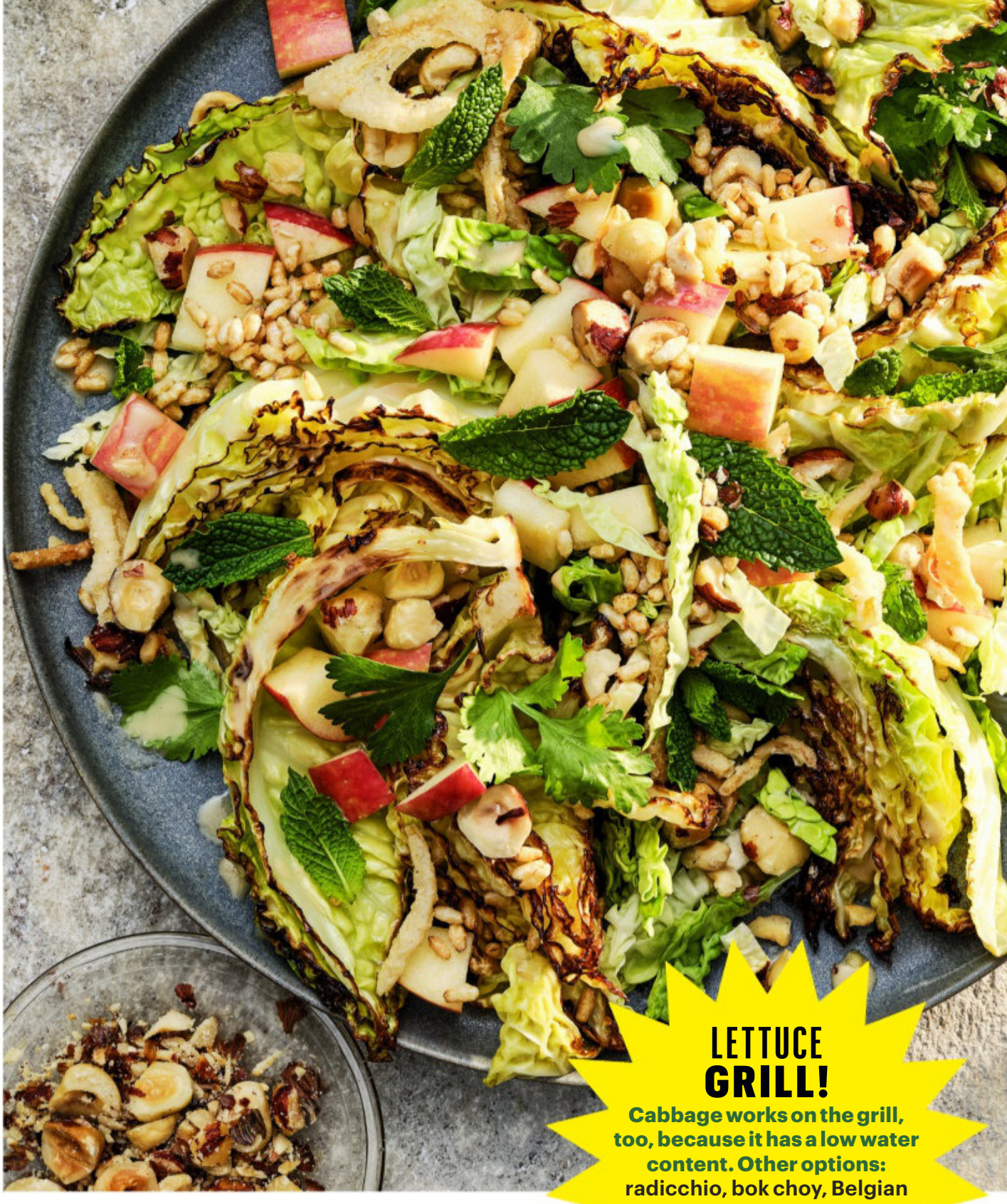
WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 5 OZ CONTAINER LITTLE GEM LETTUCE OR SPRING MIX
- ½ SMALL RED ONION, VERY THINLY SLICED AND SOAKED IN ICE WATER
- ½ LB SUMMER SQUASH, VERY THINLY SLICED
- 1 CUP PISTACHIOS, TOASTED AND SHELLED
- ⅓ CUP LEMON DRESSING (SEE BELOW)
- ½ CUP SHAVED PARMIGIANO-REGGIANO
- EXTRA-VIRGIN OLIVE OIL, FOR DRIZZLING

HOW TO MAKE IT

In a salad bowl, toss the lettuce, onion, squash, pistachios, dressing, and salt and pepper to taste. Divide the salad among 4 plates and top each with some of the cheese and olive oil. *Makes 4 salads*

LEMON DRESSING In a blender or food processor, whir till smooth the zest from 1 **lemon,** 2 Tbsp **lemon juice,** 1 small minced **garlic clove,** 1½ tsp **Dijon,** ½ cup **extra-virgin olive oil,** and ¼ cup plain **Greek yogurt.** Season with **salt and pepper.**



LETTUCE GRILL!

Cabbage works on the grill, too, because it has a low water content. Other options: radicchio, bok choy, Belgian endive, basically any kind of kale, romaine—oh, and also Savoy and purple cabbage.

CRUNCHMASTER CRISP

THE LESSON: Yes, you can sear salad.

Adding char to sturdy greens brings out their natural sweetness while adding a subtle smokiness. Balance those flavors with something tart (like the apple in this recipe), something crunchy (a triple threat of frizzled onions, toasted nuts, and puffed rice), and something fresh (picked herbs) and you have a main-course-worthy meal. ***—Recipe by Garrett Benedict, chef/owner of G Love in Portland, Oregon***

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 1 HEAD SAVOY CABBAGE, CUT INTO 8 WEDGES (ROOT/STEM INTACT)
- 2 TBSP CANOLA OIL
- ¼ CUP FRIED ONIONS
- ¼ CUP RICE KRISPIES
- 2 TBSP HAZELNUTS, TOASTED AND CRUSHED
- 6 TBSP SESAME VINAIGRETTE (SEE RIGHT)
- 1 HONEYCRISP APPLE, DICED
- MINT AND CILANTRO LEAVES, FOR GARNISH

HOW TO MAKE IT

1. In a large cast-iron pan over medium high, heat 1 Tbsp oil. Add 3 cabbage wedges and sear until dark brown, about 3 to 4 minutes. Using tongs, flip each wedge; repeat. Transfer to a plate and sprinkle with salt. Repeat the process with the remaining oil and 3 more cabbage wedges. Set aside. Cut the last 2 raw wedges into ¼-inch strips. Set aside.

2. In a small bowl, combine the fried onions, Rice Krispies, and hazelnuts. Set aside.

3. Arrange on each plate 2 charred cabbage wedges, fanning out the leaves. Drizzle each wedge with 2 Tbsp of the vinaigrette and scatter with some of the raw cabbage, apple, and onion mix. Garnish with mint and cilantro. *Makes 3 salads*

SESAME VINAIGRETTE In a blender, puree 2 Tbsp **tahini,** 2 Tbsp **mirin,** and 2 tsp **Hondashi granules.** Add ¼ cup **rice wine vinegar** and 1½ Tbsp **soy sauce** and blend on low, slowly pouring in 2 Tbsp **sesame oil** till emulsified.



ARUGULA SALAD

THE LESSON: Expand your definition of dressing.

However you feel about arugula, there's so much to love about this salad—roasted potatoes, creamy olives, cheese. But it's the basil pesto that's the unsung star, tying all those amazing flavors together. ***—Recipe by John Sidoti, executive chef of Pizzeria Vetri in Philadelphia***

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 5 LARGE FINGERLING POTATOES
- 1 SPRIG ROSEMARY
- 1 CLOVE GARLIC, CRUSHED, PLUS 1 CLOVE
- 5 TBSP EXTRA-VIRGIN OLIVE OIL, PLUS ¾ CUP
- ¼ CUP PINE NUTS
- ¼ CUP FRESH GRATED PARMESAN, PLUS 2 TBSP SHAVED
- ⅓ CUP BASIL LEAVES
- 1 TBSP RED WINE VINEGAR
- 1½ CUPS ARUGULA
- 8 TAGGIASCA OR CASTELVETRANO OLIVES

HOW TO MAKE IT

1. Preheat a charcoal grill so that the coals are white and ashy. In a small bowl, toss the potatoes, rosemary, crushed garlic clove, and 2 Tbsp olive oil. Season with salt and pepper. On a wide sheet of aluminum foil, empty the contents of the bowl and make a loose package with the foil. Roast directly on the coals till tender, 30 to 45 minutes. Remove potatoes, let cool, and slice on the bias.

2. In a food processor, pulse the garlic clove and pine nuts till a coarse paste forms. Add the ¼ cup grated Parmesan and the basil. Pulse, adding the ¾ cup olive oil in a thin stream till thickened. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Chill in the fridge.

3. In a lidded jar, add the red wine vinegar and remaining 3 Tbsp olive oil. Shake well to emulsify. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Set aside.

4. In a large bowl, add 1 Tbsp of the basil pesto, plus the red wine vinegar, arugula, potatoes, and olives. Toss lightly. Divide the salad among serving plates and top with shaved Parmesan and more salt and pepper to taste. *Makes 2 salads*

ROASTED MAITAKE MUSHROOM SALAD

THE LESSON: Meaty salads don't *need* meat.

Earthy mushrooms, slow-roasted in the oven, turn smoky and crisp-edged. Match them with a sweet-corn dressing and crunchy endive and this fungi-focused salad will make you forget grilled chicken over iceberg. ***—Recipe by Greg Vernick, chef/owner of Vernick Food & Drink in Philadelphia***

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 2 EARS SWEET CORN, CLEANED
- 6 OZ MAITAKE MUSHROOMS, BROKEN INTO SMALLER CLUSTERS
- 2 TBSP EXTRA-VIRGIN OLIVE OIL, PLUS MORE FOR DRIZZLING
- 1 HEAD BELGIAN ENDIVE, END TRIMMED, LEAVES SEPARATED
- 6 TBSP CORN-MISO DRESSING (SEE BELOW), PLUS MORE FOR SERVING
- 20 LEAVES FRESH TARRAGON

HOW TO MAKE IT

1. In a large, dry cast-iron pan over medium high, add the corn. Cook, turning occasionally, until charred on all sides, about 15 minutes. Remove from heat, allow to cool, and slice off the kernels. Reserve 1 cup of the kernels for the dressing.

2. Preheat your oven to 475°F. On a sheet pan, toss the mushrooms with the 2 Tbsp olive oil and season lightly with salt and pepper. Roast until the mushrooms begin to caramelize and lightly char, 6 to 10 minutes. Set aside to cool.

3. In a large bowl, add the endive, mushrooms, a big pinch each of salt and pepper, and 2 Tbsp of the dressing. Toss gently.

4. Spread some dressing on a serving plate, arrange the mushroom mixture on top, and garnish with some of the remaining charred corn and the tarragon, plus a swirl of extra-virgin olive oil. Repeat twice. *Makes 3 salads*

CORN-MISO DRESSING In a small pan over medium heat, brown 4 Tbsp **butter.** Add to a blender with 1 small **shallot** (thinly sliced), the zest from 1 **lemon,** 1 cup of reserved **grilled corn kernels,** 2 Tbsp fresh **ginger** (peeled and thinly sliced), 1 Tbsp room-temp **water,** ½ cup **white miso paste,** ½ cup **rice wine vinegar,** 2 tsp **honey,** ½ tsp **ground turmeric,** 1 tsp **salt,** 8 **tarragon leaves,** and a pinch of **cayenne.** Puree till smooth.

3 MORE PLANT-BASED POWERHOUSES

These umami bombs add a deep "meatiness" to salads: 1. Cubed, presmoked tofu. 2. Grilled teriyaki-marinated eggplant. 3. Baked Buffalo cauliflower wings.

Food styling: Olivia Mack McCool. Prop styling: Carla Gonzalez-Hart.

THE RISING

GENERATIONS OF RACISM AND OPPRESSION HAVE CREATED A DEVASTATING HEALTH CRISIS WITHIN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES. WHEN THE PANDEMIC HIT, IT BROUGHT ANOTHER DEADLY THREAT. HERE'S HOW A NEW VANGUARD OF INDIGENOUS CHANGEMAKERS IS STEPPING UP AND FINDING MORE WAYS FOR THEIR PEOPLE—AND ALL OF US—TO BUILD STRONGER BODIES, MINDS, AND EMOTIONAL CONNECTIONS.

BY **SHEA VASSAR**



THOSH COLLINS *is the coauthor of* The Seven Circles, *an Indigenous guide to physical, spiritual, and emotional well-being.*





SUTTON KING *is the cofounder of ShockTalk, a mental-health app.*



SEAN SHERMAN *is a chef and a cofounder of a nonprofit that trains cooks and entrepreneurs.*

IN EARLY 2021, as the first batches of coronavirus vaccines were being distributed around the country and many places struggled with availability, I walked into a Cherokee Nation health clinic in our tribe's main city of Tahlequah, Oklahoma, and rolled up my sleeve.

As the needle plunged in, I felt relieved. More important, I felt accountable. American Indians and Alaska Natives experienced the highest death rate among all ethnic groups during the height of the pandemic, with a mortality rate twice that of their white counterparts, according to the CDC.

The pandemic only magnified the poverty and existing health crises of many in our communities—while cutting off critical outlets of support. As a culture, together we have survived colonialism and forced assimilation, the theft of our land and resources, and systemic oppression such that the majority of us have left our ancestral lands to seek opportunity elsewhere. That's right: An estimated 70 percent of Indigenous people in the U. S. now live in urban or suburban areas. And no matter where we live, there are huge challenges accessing tribal health services.

American Indians and Alaska Natives face higher rates of obesity, diabetes, alcohol-use disorder, and suicide, among other health issues. While the average life expectancy in the U. S. has risen in recent years, ours hasn't. It's now seven years shorter than that of white Americans. Once the vaccine went into production, our tribal government coordinated closely with the federal Indian Health Service to enable early access to elders, frontline health workers, and the native speakers who still teach and embody our culture. Then officials quickly opened access to everyone in the tribe—and helped supply clinics serving other people around the state.

I never expected to be at that Cherokee clinic. I normally live in Brooklyn, but after months of isolation, I felt the pull to visit with my elders and reunite with my tribal community through get-togethers like local hog-fry fundraisers. Months later, I continued to find ways to feel energized. Because amid the turmoil of the past couple years, a new wave of Indigenous changemakers has arisen. Its members are combining ancient spiritual values with modern practices to help all of us feel stronger and more vital so we can shape a healthier future together.

SHEA VASSAR *is a Cherokee Nation citizen based on Lenape land (Brooklyn). She holds a master's in legal studies from the University of Oklahoma, where she focused on Indigenous peoples law.*

MOVE WITH DEEPER PURPOSE

THOSH COLLINS, 40, *Tempe, Arizona*
Cofounder of ***Well for Culture,*** *a wellness consultancy, and coauthor of the upcoming book* The Seven Circles, *an Indigenous guide to physical, spiritual, and emotional well-being*

THERE'S NO SHORTAGE of jacked shirtless guys tossing around huge weight on Instagram. But for those in the know—that'd be 35,000 followers and counting—Thosh Collins's IG feed just hits different. Take the recent video in which he paired seated overhead lever pushes, Dynamax ball pullups, and banded dips with a healthy dose of gratitude. "I give thanks for the spirit that drives my physical self," he wrote in the post.

Or the one in which he and his wife, Chelsey Luger, completed a set of landmine complexes while matching each other move for move. "As Native people, we've been moving, singing, and dancing synchronously for millennia," he wrote, adding that these activities build confidence and belonging.

The dispatches are just part of a more ambitious campaign to encourage everyone—especially Indigenous people, both in cities and on reservations—to keep moving. Nearly half of Indigenous people are obese, and American Indians and Alaska Natives are 50 percent more likely to be obese than non-Hispanic whites are.

Collins, who is Onk-Akimel O'Odham and Haudenosaunee, thinks that the sedentary lifestyle is a direct result of assimilation: While tribal elders have always preached the importance of staying active, Collins watched his own family members slow down, gain weight, and cope with substance abuse, type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular disease.

In 2014, he and Luger launched Well for Culture, a wellness consultancy that does presentations in Indigenous communities and schools. Since the pandemic, the duo have doubled down on their social-media presence, sharing fitness tips, recipes, and Indigenous-focused perspectives for well-being. Their book, *The Seven Circles* (out in October), explores how the spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional sides of wellness are all connected. "It's a model for living well," Collins says, one rooted in both Indigenous practices and Western medicine. Try his tips for finding purpose in movement and his bodyweight workout on the opposite page.



Courtesy Thosh Collins. Opposite: Sarah Silbiger/Getty Images. Previous spread: Courtesy Thosh Collins (Collins). Ne-Dah-Ness Greene (Sherman). Courtesy Sutton King (King).

STEP 1

MATCH THOSH'S MINDSET

"When I was growing up, a lot of elders would say not to take our body for granted. *That when we run, we're also giving thanks that we have legs, that we have a heart, that we have a mind, and that we're taking advantage of the gifts that were given by Natakam, the creator.*

"This can be applied whether you're running on a treadmill, using weights in a gym, playing conventional sports, doing yoga, bike riding, or swimming. ***Whatever the movement modality may be, you can think about it in a deeper sense.***

"When you're moving the body, you're not thinking about 'Oh, I'm moving this body because I want a nice set of abs, or I want this lifted.' You're thinking about ***'I'm giving thanks that I have this body to move, and I'm going to take advantage of these gifts.' Or 'I give thanks for what health I do have.'***

"And this is good for people that might be experiencing health complications. Oftentimes when they're focused on their treatment, they're focused on their deficit. ***We're not focused on the deficit, but we're focused on thriving health.*** *And that's a way for us to really manifest better health."*

STEP 2

DO THE WORKOUT

This bodyweight workout from Collins is a great way to build power, endurance, and core strength—no gym required. Try these 4 moves, doing 2 or 3 sets, with 15 seconds of rest between sets.

ALTERNATING REVERSE LUNGE	Do 8 to 12 reps per leg. Take 2 seconds to lower on each rep.
SINGLE-LEG ROMANIAN DEADLIFT	Do 5 to 10 reps per leg.
DOWNWARD DOG TO PUSHUP	Start in plank position, then lift your butt high. Return to plank position and do a push-up. Do 8 to 10 reps.
SIDE PLANK KNEE-TO-ELBOW	Start in a right side plank. Pull left elbow to left knee, then return to side-plank position. Do 10 to 12 reps per side.



BE A "GOOD RELATIVE" TO MORE PEOPLE

FRANCYS CREVIER, *Washington, D. C.*
CEO of the ***National Council of Urban Indian Health***

NEARLY A YEAR INTO the pandemic, Francys Crevier helped rewrite the playbook for how American Indians and Alaska Natives in urban areas can receive vaccines. Crevier, who is Algonquin, serves as the head of the National Council of Urban Indian Health (NCUIH) in Washington, D. C., which represents 41 Indigenous urban organizations that work together to provide culturally respectful health care in major cities.

Despite the fact that an estimated 70 percent of Indigenous people in the U. S. are now living in cities or towns, the Indian Health Service spends 1 percent of its budget on urban Indian health. That caused a huge problem once vaccines became available, because there was no central hub for distribution and infections were skyrocketing. American Indians and Alaska Natives had three and a half times the number of confirmed Covid cases compared with non-Hispanic whites during the peak of the pandemic, not to mention far greater rates of hospitalization and mortality. "Our bodies are not inferior; the systems that serve us are," Crevier says.

Rather than wait for state rollouts, Crevier tapped into the vaccine supply that was given to the Indian Health Service and partnered with the University of Maryland to establish clinic sites throughout the hard-hit Northeast. She also worked with a nonprofit called Native American LifeLines to develop the "Be a Good Relative" campaign, which focused on personal responsibility. A survey of nearly 1,500 people from more than 300 tribes conducted by the Urban Indian Health Institute showed that at least 75 percent were willing to get vaccinated, primarily motivated by "a strong sense of responsibility to protect the Native community and preserve cultural ways."

Many tribal leaders pushed a similar message on reservations while quickly opening access to everyone. Partly because of this, American Indians and Alaska Natives had the highest vaccination rates among all ethnicities by mid-2021. "Our population said that they were going to get vaccinated for the community, which I think is beautiful," Crevier says. The NCUIH has since sponsored legislation that would increase funding needed to provide better health care for all of Indian Country, including urban populations.

EAT LESS AND FEEL BETTER

SEAN SHERMAN, 48, *Minneapolis*
Cofounder of ***North American Traditional Indigenous Food Systems,*** *a nonprofit group*

SEAN SHERMAN, co-owner of the company Sioux Chef, believes that Indigenous recipes do far more than honor heritage: They can also undo some serious problems. An estimated 15 percent of the Indigenous population suffers from diabetes—a rate that's nearly twice that of the non-Hispanic white population. The Oglala Lakota tribe member hopes to change that.

"We all kind of got pushed into this colonial diet and being so disassociated with where our food comes from," Sherman says. "But if we're actually eating nutritionally dense foods, we can eat less and still feel better."

For example, toss together a few readily available Indigenous staples and you can create a tasty, protein-packed dish like bison meatballs with wild greens salad (see recipe on opposite page)—one of the hits from Sherman's James Beard Award–winning cookbook.

Sherman got his first kitchen job at 13. He has since spent years researching how his ancestors ate, preserved foods, and found ways to live off the land. In early 2020, he'd planned to showcase all that delicious potential in the heart of Minneapolis with the Indigenous Food Lab. (Imagine a nonprofit learning space for training more Indigenous cooks and entrepreneurs.)

First, the pandemic delayed things. Then, in May 2020, protests over the murder of George Floyd rocked Minneapolis. As his city struggled, Sherman used the food lab to address the spike in homelessness among the impoverished Indigenous population. His team served more than 400 healthy Indigenous meals a day in the middle of the pandemic. By the winter of 2021, they'd joined forces with other Native nonprofits to distribute nearly 80,000 meals to families and elders all around Minnesota, supporting nine tribal communities.

In July 2021, Sherman and his partner, Dana Thompson, opened a new restaurant, Owamni, which received a James Beard Award for best new restaurant the following year. Looking ahead, they are set on opening new food labs in heavily Indigenous places adjoining ancestral lands, including Anchorage, Alaska; Rapid City, South Dakota; and Bozeman, Montana. "Not only will they have access to their Indigenous foods but also the education on how to continue Indigenous food systems into the future," Sherman says. It's a recipe worth repeating.



Nate Ryan. Opposite: Courtesy Nanggaahlaangstangs.

CORN AND BLACK BEAN BISON MEATBALLS WITH WILD GREENS SALAD

Recipe from *The Sioux Chef's Indigenous Kitchen,* by Sean Sherman with Beth Dooley

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

- 1 LB GROUND BISON
- KERNELS FROM 1 EAR OF CORN
- 1 SMALL WHITE ONION, DICED
- 5 SMALL CLOVES OF GARLIC, MINCED
- 1 (15 OZ) CAN BLACK BEANS, DRAINED
- 1 TSP KOSHER SALT
- 1 TSP OREGANO, CHOPPED
- 1 TSP CHIVES, CHOPPED
- 1 TSP SAGE, CHOPPED
- 1 TBSP SUNFLOWER OIL, PLUS 2 TSP
- 8 CORN TORTILLAS (BLUE CORN PREFERRED)
- 4 CUPS WILD DANDELION LEAVES, PLANTAIN LEAVES, CREEPING CHARLIE LEAVES, OR GREENS OF YOUR CHOICE
- 1 LARGE STALK RHUBARB, SLICED THIN
- 2 LARGE YELLOW TOMATOES, THINLY CUT IN WEDGES
- 1 CUP BLACKBERRIES

HOW TO MAKE IT

1. In a large bowl, mix by hand the bison, corn, onion, garlic, black beans, salt, oregano, chives, and sage. Using an ice cream scoop, make tightly packed meatballs and set aside.
2. Add 1 Tbsp sunflower oil to a large cast-iron pan over medium heat. Add the meatballs and sear on all sides, 3 to 5 minutes per side. Transfer the meatballs to a plate.
3. Carefully wipe out the pan, add 1 tsp sunflower oil, and return to heat. Grill the tortillas and set aside.
4. In a salad bowl, add the greens, rhubarb, and tomatoes. In a small bowl, crush the blackberries with the remaining sunflower oil. Add to the salad bowl, toss, and serve with the meatballs and tortillas. *Feeds 4*



ADMIT THAT THINGS CAN SUCK SOMETIMES

NANGGAAHLAANGSTANGS, 32,
Hydaburg, Alaska
Founder of ***Tlaatsgaa Development,***
a basketball camp and consulting agency

THE QUOTE IN his high school yearbook goes like this: "If I'm remembered for being a good basketball player and nothing else, I have done nothing with basketball." Nanggaahlaangstangs, a member of the Haida and Tlingit tribes in Alaska, wrote that message as a senior nearly a decade and a half ago. The six-foot-nine, 245-pound pro prospect, who once went by the anglicized name Damen Bell-Holter, went on to star at Oral Roberts University and play with the Boston Celtics.

But he always kept his message in mind. At 19, he started his first basketball camp for other Indigenous players. Within a couple years, he'd run dozens more on reservations around the country—and then many more by the time he left hoops in 2017. He now runs those camps full-time. "My first mindset was 'I want more Native basketball players playing at the highest levels,' " he says about developing young players' athletic skills. Now he knows it's not that simple: "There's a lot of things we have to navigate through first." Thankfully, he's learned plenty of lessons along the way.

Teamwork Wins the Day

"Being a great teammate—what does that mean?" Nanggaahlaangstangs asks. It's rarely about being the highest scorer. ***You can accomplish more by "cheering and empowering others" to get stronger.*** *"What does it mean to show up on time? What does it mean to pay attention to all these small little things that young athletes can kind of tie over into real life?"*

Stay 100 Percent Transparent

"I was not good at academics and had a ton of trauma back home—domestic violence, alcoholism," he says. As an Afro-Indigenous athlete, he also faced anti-Blackness and racism within his community. ***"I tell [players] about all the difficulties and that things are going to suck at times."*** *That way they're better prepared to cope.*

Listen. *Shhhh!* No, Really.

"We're not taking the time to listen and get a better understanding of [all the people] who are carrying hurt," he says. ***"If I can create space for men who will show up as better fathers, then we're going to be creating a better generation."***



STAY CALM DESPITE THE CHAOS

LOREN ANTHONY, *Gallup, New Mexico*
Actor and founder of ***Chizh for Cheii,*** *a nonprofit that helps families heat their homes*

WHEN *DEXTER: NEW BLOOD* dropped on Showtime in November 2021, it marked the 36th time Loren Anthony had participated in a major film or television project. He played Sam, a zoologist creating issues for the Dark Passenger. Still, he was more excited by another milestone: the start of his tenth season with Chizh for Cheii, which translates to "firewood for Grandpa" in Diné, Anthony's first language. Each winter, the nonprofit cuts and delivers hundreds of truckloads of wood to help isolated and impoverished people living in the Navajo Nation heat their homes.

The group's task is critical, with temperatures on the open plains of Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah regularly dropping below freezing for up to five months each year. But with Covid, people there faced an even tougher reality: Prior to the release of the vaccine, the Navajo population was decimated, with the highest per capita infection rate in the United States.

So Anthony's team worked year-round, making hundreds of deliveries of hand sanitizer, food, and water in addition to the firewood. "During the chaos of everything, we were calm," he says. "We were chill, and we brought a sense of normalcy to a lot of the elders." All of these actions are inspired by the Diné system of K'é, which roughly means "true kinship." And Anthony continues to generate more numbers in hopes of inspiring others. "I'm like the Navajo version of Forrest Gump," he jokes. "I just wear so many hats."

LOREN BY THE NUMBERS

1,700

Total truckloads of wood delivered in 2020 by Chizh for Cheii, along with mutual aid. "We believe in community," Anthony says. "We believe in doing things together, because that's the only way it's going to work."

112,000

Total boxes of food given out at the peak of the pandemic. The hard work was enjoyable. "We feel a deep responsibility to do something with what we've got, because who else is going to do it?"

1

Number of movies Anthony walked away from, finding its portrayal of Native Americans disrespectful. In 2015, he and others left Adam Sandler's *The Ridiculous 6*. They felt the so-called satire played into prejudice, not against it.

117

Pounds that Anthony shed in a personal transformation. In 2009, the actor weighed 298 pounds and was diagnosed as prediabetic with high blood pressure. So he focused on his diet and took up powerlifting.

At least 300

Total membership in the Iron Warriors, a community exercise group that Anthony has led in free weekly workouts at Gallup's public school stadium. They include field sprints, bear crawls, walking lunges, and pushups.

13

Years of sobriety from drugs and alcohol. He's mentored kids in crisis. "I'm trying to show especially our Native kids that it's possible to be sober, to be educated, to stay where you're from, and just be a positive person."

BREAK DOWN BARRIERS TO MENTAL HEALTH

SUTTON KING, 29, *New York City*
Cofounder of the ***Urban Indigenous Collective*** *and cofounder of* ***ShockTalk,*** *a mental-health app*

WHEN THE PANDEMIC HIT and the world went into lockdown, Sutton King saw another crisis looming—one of mental health.

American Indians and Alaska Natives face a suicide rate 20 percent higher than that of the non-Hispanic white population. They are also 60 percent more likely to experience the feeling that "everything is an effort" all or most of the time, as compared with non-Hispanic whites, based on data from the Office of Minority Health.

King, a descendant of the Menominee and Oneida tribes who grew up in Wisconsin, has experienced her own mental-health struggle. "My family on the Native side were [once] sent to a school where the motto was 'Kill the Indian, Save the Man,' so [I had an] understanding of that trauma," she says, "and that the mental-health experience that I have in my own body didn't start with me."

But seeking professional help remains a challenge, because most therapists aren't Indigenous. "We have to explain the intergenerational trauma. We have to explain the cultural nuances just so that we can begin the talk therapy," King says. Many Native Americans are also denied access to federal services from the Urban Indian Health Program because they don't meet the federally mandated "blood quantum," a measurement of direct lineage that many Indigenous advocates consider intentionally restrictive and blatantly racist.

That's why she launched the Urban Indigenous Collective (UIC) in New York City in October 2019. The mental-health and wellness nonprofit advocates for resources for all self-identifying Indigenous people, regardless of blood quantum. As the world closed down with the pandemic, the group surveyed the Indigenous community to hear firsthand what they thought might be their most pressing needs.

The result: In July 2020, the members of UIC produced ShockTalk, a free pilot app on Facebook Messenger that connects all Indigenous people to Indigenous therapists for telehealth visits. The service helps people book appointments while navigating hurdles like benefits and insurance. UIC has partnered with researchers at Columbia University to keep testing and improving their service and expects to release a mobile app.

The group remains committed to being as informed and intentional as possible in everything it does. "We really curated this around the community voice," King says. The goal now is to keep listening. ■



Courtesy Sutton King. Opposite: Steven St. John.

OTHER INDIGENOUS CHANGEMAKERS

@NOTORIOUSCREE
A hip-hop dancer turned hoop-dance artist who has performed at the Olympics and honors an ancestral art. He went viral after sharing his rendition of TikTok's "Blinding Lights" dance video.

@CHELSEY.MOVES
A fitfluencer who cofounded Well for Culture with husband Thosh Collins. She shares her own active lifestyle and culturally inspired workouts and training tips.

@HOT.GLUE.BURNS
A cosplayer who has elevated the art form with his bold depiction of Captain Native America. His heroic character reimagines the iconic super soldier as a tribal icon.

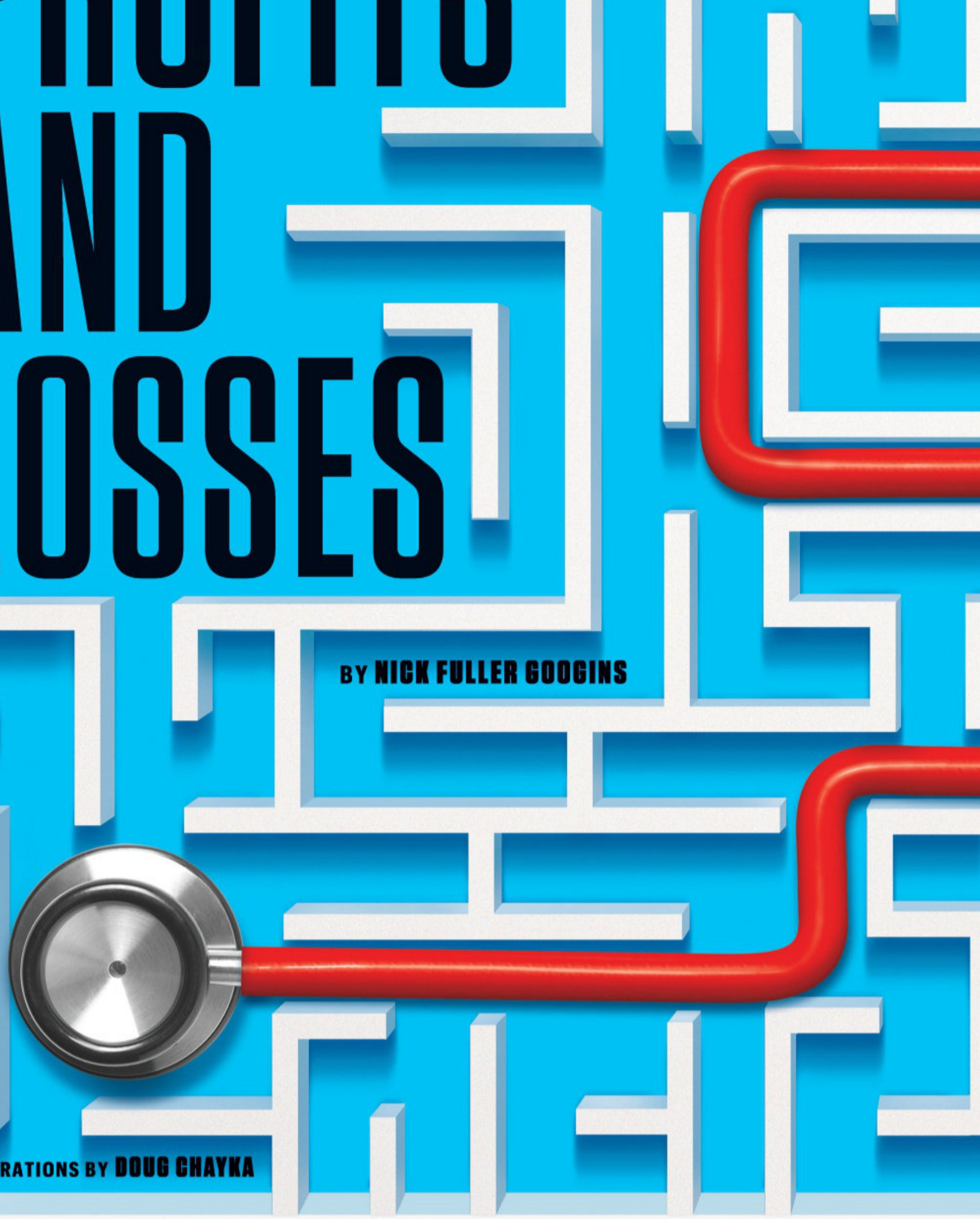
@ARIELTWETO
An Alaskan runner who has run every day since May 2002. Her nonprofit Popping Bubbles works to break social and physical barriers so people can lead happier lives.

@SUPAMANHIPHOP
A DJ, hip-hop artist, and flute player who sports bold ceremonial regalia. His award-winning music mixes Indigenous cultural vibes with looped beats and smart social commentary.

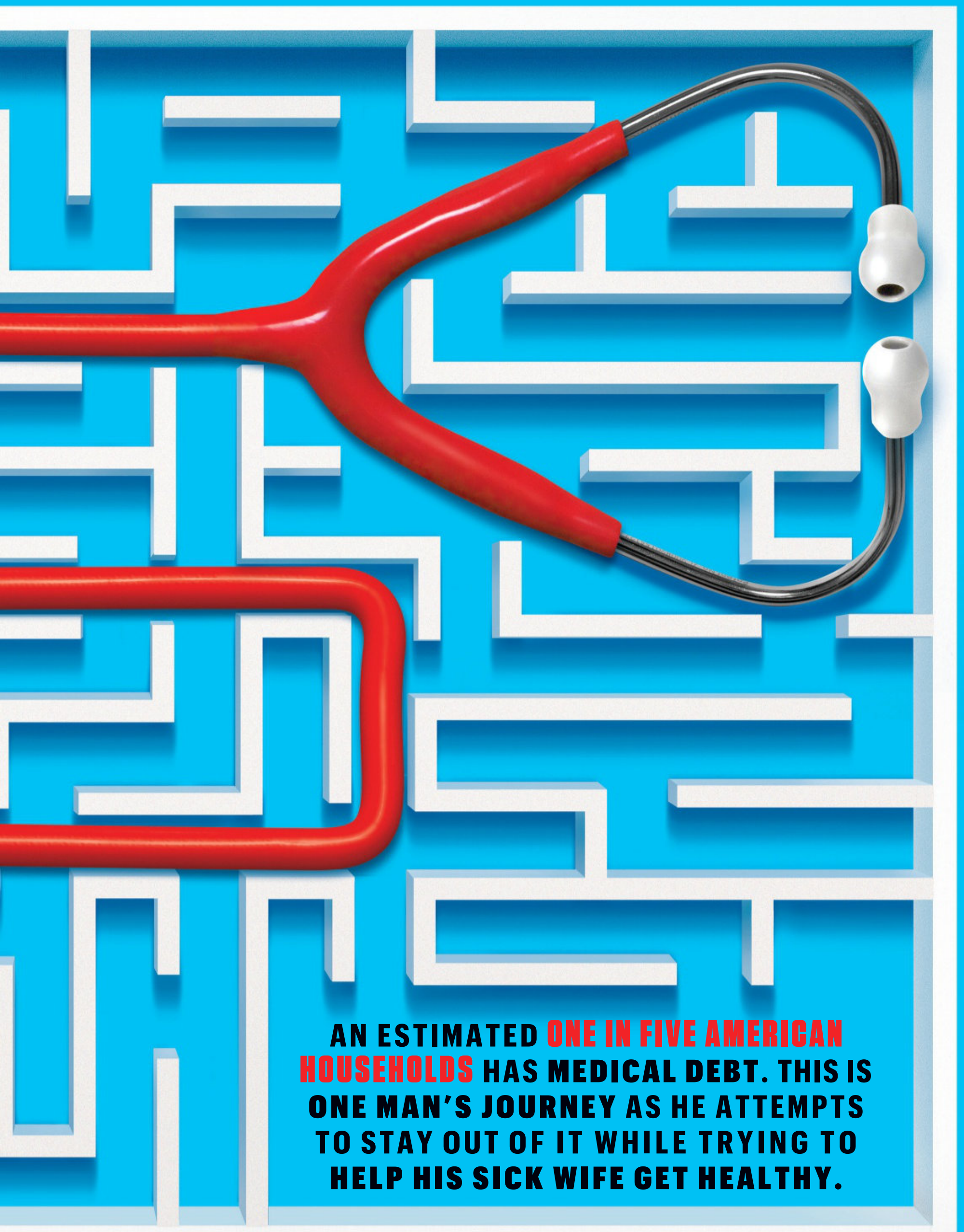
@HUDDLEBERRYFINN
A fashion designer and the creative director behind the Sovereign line at Urban Native Era. His streetwear collection is based on reinterpreting the concept of self-governance.

PROFITS AND LOSSES

BY NICK FULLER GOOGINS



ILLUSTRATIONS BY DOUG CHAYKA



AN ESTIMATED ONE IN FIVE AMERICAN HOUSEHOLDS HAS MEDICAL DEBT. THIS IS ONE MAN'S JOURNEY AS HE ATTEMPTS TO STAY OUT OF IT WHILE TRYING TO HELP HIS SICK WIFE GET HEALTHY.

My wife books an appointment with a nephrologist. A nephrologist—we learn—is a kidney specialist, and there are two reasons my wife will see one. First, a primary-care doctor has flagged excess protein in her urine. Excess protein is most likely due to dehydration, the doctor explains, but there's a chance it could be something kidney related. She refers my wife, just in case. But this isn't the only reason my wife will see a nephrologist. The second reason she will go is because she can; I have a new teaching job—fourth grade—and the school pays for half of a decent PPO plan. For the first time in five years, my wife and I can visit a wide network of specialists. We have entered our Age of Less-Shitty Health Insurance.

"Call me as soon as you're out," I tell her.
She promises she will.

IN MY EARLY 20s, I began saving my health insurance cards. Every new job, every move, every change in plans. Anthem BlueCross, Molina, Oscar. . . . My collection has become a stack, inches thick. I don't know why I started collecting them. I must have found something darkly absurd with the system even then, back when I had no need for doctors or hospitals. When everyone I loved and would come to love was healthy, and always going to be so.

My wife calls after her appointment. She is trying not to cry. Then she's crying. She's not dehydrated, she tells me. The nephrologist, by examining her blood and a patchwork of past records, has determined that her kidneys are in rapid decline. Have been in decline for approximately five years. Had my wife been diagnosed earlier, the nephrologist explains, treatment would be a different story. But now, after a half decade of unchecked deterioration? The nephrologist is blunt: This is extremely serious, she tells my wife. Your kidneys are failing.

WALK COMPOST BUCKET to neighborhood garden. Bike at sunset. Read in bed. Cuddle with Dog. Watch stand-up comedy. Stay present. What has happened has happened. We are husband and wife. We have now. The past shouldn't matter. But oh my God it does.

The five years in which my wife's kidneys were failing overlap almost precisely with our Age of Extremely Shitty Insurance. During the Age of Extremely Shitty Insurance, I tutored, I installed solar panels on rooftops, I taught at a youth prison. I weighed crates of lobsters as a deckhand on a boat. My wife taught movement: Pilates, yoga, choreography. She was an adjunct in the dance department of a large university. Years of good, socially useful labor, and none of it came with insurance. We purchased private insurance through Covered California, the state's Obamacare exchange. We bought insurance because we had to—coverage is mandatory in California—and because we needed to: My wife was vaguely unwell, and we didn't know why. But do not make the mistake of confusing health insurance with health care. We did.

***TWO PILLARS** OF EXTREMELY SHITTY HEALTH INSURANCE:*
1. Networks too narrow.
2. Deductibles too high.

WITH THE EXCEPTION OF a few PPO plans, the majority of the Obamacare options we had were HMOs. We discovered that HMOs, to put it plainly, are shit. In our experience, you're not covered if you want to see a specialist without a referral from a primary-care doctor. Even if you have seen countless primary-care doctors in the past, as my wife had. Even if you know every question they'll ask. Doesn't matter. So fine. You'll play by HMO rules.

But then comes the first pillar: networks so narrow they are practically one-dimensional. Good luck finding a primary-care doctor nearby who is accepting new patients *and* has an open appointment in the non-distant future. And that's for primary care. You want a nephrologist? Ha. Even if you didn't need a referral—which you do!—you'd have better luck in Vegas.

Then, looming above all, is the second pillar: the annual deductible. Our deductible with one company was more than $12,000. When we changed plans the next year, our deductible was nearly $14,000. Catastrophe aside, no family will ever hit those numbers. What this means is that almost every visit costs full price. Eye-popping bills have an instant chilling effect: My wife slowly convinces herself that maybe she doesn't need a doctor. Maybe she just feels sick because she's not getting enough sleep? Eating the wrong foods? Exercising too much? She cuts caffeine. Spends less energy—less time, less stress—trying and failing to find a doctor who can help.

This is how Extremely Shitty Health Insurance works: not by denying claims, but by making it nearly impossible to access care to begin with. Death by a thousand hurdles. Extremely Shitty Health Insurance, we decide, is closer to a theoretical concept of insurance than anything useful. Attempting to use it triggers a series of small battles, which is—by definition—a war. And unless you are quite fortunate, our insurance battles are yours, too. But you already know this. This is our story. This is America.

AMERICA'S FOR-PROFIT health insurance system took off during World War II, when—

No. I can't. I'm a calm man by nature—just ask my students—but discussing health insurance has the same effect on me as leaf blowers: Merely thinking about the topic makes my blood pressure climb. Healthier to take deep breaths. Go for a jog. Be present for my wife in the days leading up to her kidney biopsy. The nephrologist needs a tissue sample to learn what is causing the damage and what—if anything—can be done to halt it. Until the biopsy, there is nothing to do but live life and wait.

I HATE TALKING about insurance. I can't stop talking about insurance. These two facts are both true at once.

I can't possibly not explain, for example, how health insurance exists in cycles, and how each cycle begins with immediate delay. If you've recently moved, or experienced another "Qualifying Life Event" that allows you to change your health care, your new Obamacare insurance won't kick in until the first of the next month after enrollment. Until the first of next month, cross your fingers. Buckle your seat belt. Hope your kidneys are not deteriorating.

We change Extremely Shitty Health Insurance plans. My wife searches for a doctor. Your insurance does not cover that doctor, she is told. Not that doctor, either. That doctor is a specialist; you'll need a referral. That primary-care doctor is out of network. That one isn't accepting new patients. That one has an appointment open—in five weeks.

Five weeks later, the doctor is running late. The family clinic—the one place she found accepting our insurance and new patients—is overcrowded, overwhelmed. My wife has work. She misses work. She waits. Her name is called. Two months after enrolling with insurance, she is finally in a room with a doctor. She describes her symptoms—chills, aches, fatigue, nausea. Blood is taken. A follow-up appointment is scheduled at the next available date, in five weeks.

Five weeks later: The doctor she last saw works here only Wednesdays and Fridays. Nobody told you? Your blood work? Huh, we don't seem to have the results. We'll need new samples. Now please, tell me, what brings you here today?

The cycle resets. No genuine care is administered. Meanwhile, my wife's kidneys continue their quiet decline.

We upgrade my wife's plan from Bronze to Silver in hope of better results. The next open enrollment period, we ditch the company altogether and switch to another. Nothing helps. Why is this so hard? We are intelligent people. How could going to the doctor be this confusing? My wife only wants to know why she is sick. What are we paying for? At some point it becomes difficult to believe that the hurdles themselves are not the core of any health insurance company's business model. It becomes difficult to extend the benefit of the doubt. Are they sincerely trying to help? Because we are trying. We've been paying our premiums. For years.

I TALK ABOUT insurance with my father-in-law at the kitchen table. I talk insurance with other teachers at lunch. My brother and parents on the phone. My friends. I don't want to be this person. Am I insufferable? I try not to talk about insurance with my wife—stress is unhelpful—but I do. God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change. God grant me the space to remind everyone that America's health insurance industry provides zero health-care services of its own.

That means, for example, that none of Oscar's 2,600 employees are paid to nebulize your asthmatic nephew. Not one of the 14,000 people working at Molina is responsible for helping your mother when she seizes. Don't bother asking any of the 98,000 employees at Anthem BlueCross to treat your wife's kidneys.

What, then, do these corporations do?

They collect our monthly premiums. They use a portion of that pool to cover "direct health-care costs"—for example, the hospitals, doctors, and nurses who treat us, as well as the medications we need. The companies pay their overhead and administrative costs and tally whatever is left as profit.

We could say that they benefit from us as a society, yet benefit at our expense.

We could ask a biologist what to call such a relationship.

Any biologist could tell us.

The relationship is parasitic.

MY WIFE AND I, in the days leading up to her biopsy, are anxious. My wife's mother died of cancer. Cancer looms on the worried frontiers of our minds. On the eve of the biopsy, the hospital calls. My wife thinks it might be the nephrologist with a last-minute reminder. It's not the nephrologist. It's the billing department, asking for $3,600: a prepayment for tomorrow's procedure.

After a brief panic, an Internet search assures us that prepayment, while phrased to sound mandatory, is not. Prepayment is a new tactic used by hospitals to secure the goods from patients without involving insurance. If this sounds manipulative and mildly immoral, I agree. Also, I get it: Hospitals want to avoid dealing with insurance just as much as you and I do.

CORRESPONDENCE FROM ***THE AGE OF LESS-SHITTY HEALTH INSURANCE, EXCERPTS:***

Your hospital will bill you separately for hospital services; this is for professional fees only.
This is a bill.
This is not a bill.
This bill is for laboratory work requested by your physician.
These charges were not included in your physician's bill.
Your insurance has been billed twice. They have not responded or made payment.
We are unable to process the following claim.
Your insurance coverage was terminated on the date of service.
If you believe your insurance is responsible, please contact them directly.
The service was reviewed and it's not approved.
If payment in full has been sent, disregard this notice.
Please provide the necessary information and re-file the corrected claim, in its entirety.
Immediate payment required.
Act immediately.
Please make payment immediately.
This is your 2nd notice.
This is your final notice.
Dear Member: We hope to see you again if your health-care need arises.

Is there such a thing as Non-Shitty Health Insurance? Call me a skeptic. Insurance, at its historical heart, is a financial instrument, meant as protection from uncertain loss:

Your spice caravan may perish in the Gobi, or it may not.

Your tea ship may sink in the Atlantic, or it may not.

Your phone may shatter on the bathroom tiles, or it may not.

But we are not objects. We are people, bound to our magical, mortal bodies. There is no *may not*. There is disease. There are accidents. There is—if lucky—old age. Insurance is the wrong tool to treat the inevitable. When my wife needs care, I don't want financial protection from uncertain loss. The loss is happening. Do not talk to me about deductibles. There is no maximum out-of-pocket. I will do anything.

BIOPSY RESULTS are back. No cancer. Joyous news. My wife's kidneys have not failed. More joyous news.

But: Her kidneys have half failed.

Scar damage. Fifty percent. Irreversible.

Words the nephrologist speaks from behind her N95. She is baffled: A doctor should have caught this years ago. How was this allowed to go undetected for so long? We don't waste her time explaining how Extremely Shitty Insurance made a relatively simple diagnosis impossible for us to obtain. We can hardly understand it ourselves—how my wife was unable to see the same primary-care physician long enough to flag the issue, order blood work, schedule a follow-up, analyze blood work, refer her to a specialist. A straightforward process that would have required a continuum of care but which our HMO—

No. We won't bother the nephrologist with this. Her job is not navigating insurance. Her job is treating my wife. She offers a tentative diagnosis: IgA nephropathy, an inflammatory disease. But the nephrologist isn't sure; my wife's labs don't present like the IgA on which she has published. The nephrologist wonders aloud: *Alport syndrome*? She orders a genetic panel. Whatever the cause, the goal is remission. Halt the decline.

How?

Lessen inflammation. Lower blood pressure. *Avoid stress.* Stress raises blood pressure, and high blood pressure is a destructive force on kidney function.

So my wife gets plenty of sleep. Exercises daily. Eats healthy. Cuts work hours. Walks with friends. Cuddles with Dog as often as Dog will tolerate cuddles.

And yet she must continue to visit the lab to give blood and urine. She must see the nephrologist. She must navigate claims, co-pays, networks. Insurance greets her at every step. How does one avoid stress yet receive health care in America?

What is the sound of one hand clapping?

AS MY WIFE'S KIDNEYS suffered, the net worth of the people running the insurance companies didn't. In 2018, for instance, Molina's president and CEO, Joseph M. Zubretsky, received a $3.9 million bonus. He is not—has never been—a doctor.

The health-care startup Oscar was cofounded by Josh Kushner, brother to Jared—husband to Ivanka, son-in-law to Donald. Oscar has a cheeky, techy flair. Kushner and his cofounders, just like Joseph M. Zubretsky, have no medical background. He is a billionaire venture capitalist who made a fortune on companies like Instagram and Warby Parker. He recently bought a Manhattan penthouse from his family's real estate firm for $35 million.

The CEO of Anthem BlueCross, one of the largest health insurance corporations to ever exist, is Gail Boudreaux. In 2021, she made $17,109,952.

In 2021, Joseph M. Zubretsky made $17,812,327.

In 2021, on the day of Oscar's IPO, Josh Kushner's shares reportedly became worth $1.1 billion.

If it seems as though I'm being passive-aggressive with these facts, that isn't my intention. I'm openly aggressive. I'm angry. I don't know what else to be.

IF IT SEEMS AS THOUGH I'M BEING PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE WITH THESE FACTS, THAT ISN'T MY INTENTION. I'M OPENLY AGGRESSIVE. I'M ANGRY. I DON'T KNOW WHAT ELSE TO BE.

MOLINA HEALTHCARE (MOH) *Q2 2018 RESULTS, EARNINGS-CALL TRANSCRIPT:*
Number of times word **doctor** *is spoken: 0*
Number of times word **hospital** *is spoken: 0*
Number of times word **patient** *is spoken without prefix* **in-** *or* **out-**: *0*
Example: "inpatient cost."
Example: "outpatient fee schedule."

Imagine a school-board meeting with no mention of *teacher* or *school* or *education*. Imagine the board isn't pretending to discuss anything but profit. Imagine what it must be like to feel so secure—so comfortable in the take—that you don't even need to fake it.

LAST YEAR, before Thanksgiving, our insurance company denied the genetic panel the nephrologist had ordered to test my wife for Alport syndrome. *Panel testing is investigative and not medically necessary because we have not seen information that panel testing improves health.*

We will pay $1,500 for the genetic-panel test out of pocket because of course we will. The results come back: no Alport syndrome. Great. But my wife's kidneys are still irreversibly half damaged and struggling.

The nephrologist prescribes a powerful steroid to combat inflammation, along with two drugs to counteract side effects, plus another for blood pressure. The cocktail fills my wife



with an iridescent power over the summer, which she enjoys. The part she does not enjoy is that the drugs make pregnancy a dangerous risk. She is 37. Just before her diagnosis, we had arrived at the decision to try for a family. I had my teaching job with Less-Shitty Insurance. We were ready. Now plans have changed. Which is fine—we will have wonderful years, with children or without. But kidney function directly correlates with life expectancy. Which is not fine. And the nephrologist said that this should have been caught earlier. The loss never should have been allowed to happen.

A WAR STORY: It is the Age of Extremely Shitty Insurance, and my wife has been on the phone with the insurance company for hours. I offer to take over so she can get ready for work, but they won't allow it unless she submits some authorization form. I lose my calm. I yell bad words. Insurance hangs up. My wife cries, furious at me, the system, everything. She leaves for work. I stand in the quiet of the kitchen. Then I call back. I introduce myself as my wife. I speak in a Michael Jackson falsetto. I know my date of birth, my Social Security number, my address. Are they going to claim I'm not who I say I am? They are not.

For hours, as they transfer me around, we all pretend. I never break character. Which company was it? What was I fighting for? Did we win? I can't remember. What I remember is holding the phone at arm's length so I could laugh at the enraging absurdity of it all.

MOLINA HEALTHCARE (MOH) *Q2 2018*
RESULTS, EARNINGS-CALL TRANSCRIPT, EXCERPTS, JOSEPH M. ZUBRETSKY, PRESIDENT AND CEO:
. . . Our marketplace business has continued to outperform our forecast . . .
It is becoming clear that the price increases we placed in the market along with improved . . .
. . . Across all product lines, we managed to a medical care ratio favorable . . .

Medical care ratio: a key metric that health insurance corporations use to calculate earnings. Under any name—benefits expense ratio (Anthem), health benefits ratio (Centene), medical benefits ratio (CVS Health)—the math is simple.

Total medical expenses paid by insurer / total premiums collected from members.

To put it simply: lower medical loss ratio, higher profits for the insurer.

More simply: From my perspective, the longer they can deposit your premiums while making it as difficult as possible for your family to get reimbursed for care, the more they make.

We think of these corporations as faceless behemoths riding the cold algorithms of market capitalism. They're not. They're captained by people who eat and sleep and shit like you and me. The Manhattan condominium where Josh Kushner was living in 2019? You can see photos online. What a place. There's the kitchen where he poured his wine. The toilet where he scrolled his phone. I'm not saying that the people who run health insurance companies are evil. I don't know them well enough. But I do know them better than they know my wife. None of them were—are—aware she exists. Yet each has impacted her—and our family, our future—in profound and irreversible ways.

I guess what I'm saying is this: They are the ones who made this personal.

Not me. Not my wife. Them.

MY WIFE ENJOYS a good summer followed by a not great fall. Numbers that should be low are rising. Numbers that should be high are falling. It's October. Halloween. It's autumn in America: pumpkin patches, open enrollment.

My wife and I stand before the computer, 20 tabs open. Open enrollment is our chance to select a new insurance plan from the eight that my school offers through two corporations. Each plan has different premiums, deductibles, networks. So much choice. So much freedom. It's terrible.

Open enrollment exists—like much of Obamacare—to safeguard the insurance industry. Without open enrollment, the argument goes, healthy people would game the system by enrolling in insurance only when sick or injured.

But to view their argument differently, gaming the system would look a lot like accessing health care simply, without barriers, and when needed.

Instead, we are given a few weeks to predict what disease or accident might afflict our family in the calendar year ahead. Then we must balance this fortune-telling against our budget. My wife and I do the math for all situations. One situation involves kidney-disease remission. Other situations do not. One situation involves a baby. Most do not. My wife, ordered to avoid stress, must think hard on whether she will get to be a mother in this lifetime. She looks up kidney disease life-expectancy charts. She tells me I should get a new girlfriend if she dies early. She apologizes to me for being sick. We cry.

My school gave me two months to select a new plan. What seemed at first like an excessive amount of time isn't nearly enough.

MORE THAN 29 MILLION Americans carry medical debt.

One third of the money raised through GoFundMe is for medical costs.

There is something worse than Extremely Shitty Insurance. I am aware of this. Medical bankruptcy is worse. Not taking your child to the ER because you can't afford to is worse. No insurance is worse.

I am aware that without Less-Shitty Insurance, a nephrologist may never have diagnosed my wife. Less-Shitty Insurance helped start her on a path to possible recovery.

That's one way of viewing it.

Another way: Our insurance company at the time erected fewer hurdles between my wife and the care she needed.

Should I be grateful?

I'm asking in good faith. I'm honestly conflicted.

I FIND PURPOSE in protecting those I love. I ask them to wear helmets while biking. Seat belts, people. Do you know where the nearest fire extinguisher is? I do. I keep an earthquake kit beneath the bed. Every day in my classroom, I'm making a mental plan for a shooter—how to save as many of my students as possible. Captain Safety, my wife calls me. It must be a biological drive coded in our DNA—not unique to masculinity, but one way our genome compels me to be a good man. An impulse to protect.

So what happens to the spirit—the man—when confronted by a threat like the health insurance industry, so relentless and labyrinthian that even with all your waking hours, even with your best falsetto, you cannot help those you most love? What to do with the anger? The frustration? The hopelessness? What to feed it to keep it from feeding on you?

MORE THAN A YEAR has passed since my wife's diagnosis. She continues to see the nephrologist, and sometimes an acupuncturist and an herbalist. Our Less-Shitty Health Insurance says it covers acupuncture, but it rejects my wife's claim (reason: "a smudged stamp" on the form) and it's less stressful to pay out of pocket than to appeal. There's no point in filing a claim for the herbalist. Her numbers go up, her numbers go down. Good weeks are followed by terrible weeks. One terrible week in early 2022, she faints at the lab while having blood drawn. I half carry her across the street to the ER. After a long night, we return home, exhausted, to find a $900 medical bill in the mailbox, dated, inexplicably, nine months earlier, and claiming that—

NO. I AM so sick of this. I can't. I just can't.

I hate talking about insurance. Why can't I stop talking about insurance?

Because I must process what's happening to the woman I love.

But there is another reason, I think—another reason we are compelled to tell stories. We are a social species. Our success stems almost exclusively from cooperation. We are not built to defeat huge existential threats alone. We tell stories not just for catharsis but for strategy. To share knowledge. To plan. What worked? What didn't? What might we do—if not in our lifetime, then for our nieces, our nephews, the fragile, gorgeous world to come—to eliminate the threat for good?

We hate talking about it. We have to talk about it.

We can't stop. We shouldn't. ■

NICK FULLER GOOGINS *is a fourth-grade teacher and the author of the upcoming novel* The Great Transition.

How to Reduce the Worst Health Insurance Headaches

Ways to take down the bills and runaround you get even with Less-Shitty Health Insurance. **BY KEVIN DUPZYK**

YOU DON'T HAVE TIME TO DEAL

***22:** Average number of phone calls it takes a professional medical advocate to resolve a billing dispute.*

THE HEADACHE: You don't have the time you suspect it will take to untangle the thorny billing issue you are facing.

WHO CAN HELP: A patient advocate.

THE SOLUTION: You share your information with a medical billing advocate and they take over, researching options for reducing your bill and doing much of the legwork. Some nonprofits offer this service for free; there are also for-profit advocates, such as those listed in the AdvoConnection Directory. Some corporate benefits packages include access to companies like Wellthy, which offers patient advocacy services.

THE HEADACHE: Your bill is on its way to a collection agency because it's been outstanding for too long.

WHO CAN HELP: You, or a patient advocate.

THE SOLUTION: It takes chutzpah—and a willingness to risk your credit getting dinged—but if you let a medical debt persist long enough to go to collections, you may be able to negotiate a better deal. "The older it gets, the more the billing office will want to get rid of it," says Linda Michelson of the Medical Bill Advocate. When you hear from collections, make a settlement offer that's supported by data: Find prices via the nonprofit FAIR Health (fairhealthconsumer.org). Note: The three major credit bureaus have made big changes, and you now have a year—up from six months—before medical debt in collections harms your credit. Also, paid-off debt will now drop off your report.

SOMEONE MADE A MISTAKE

***50:** Approximate percentage of bills the National Patient Advocate Foundation encounters that have an error. (Other estimates are higher.)*

THE HEADACHE: There's an error in your bill. For example, a few stitches on your arm was billed as Tommy John surgery.

WHO CAN HELP: Your insurer.

THE SOLUTION: Call your insurer and let it know about the problem so it can do the tangling with providers—after all, your insurer foots most of the bill, so it has a strong incentive to make sure it's right. Note: Thanks to the new No Surprises Act, all hospitals are now required to treat emergencies as in-network services. (Major exception: Ambulances can still bill as out of network, so consider Ubering if you have the wherewithal.) And you can't get an out-of-network bill for services you didn't have a choice in. For example, if your in-network gastroenterologist has an out-of-network guy put you under before a colonoscopy, your bill should show the in-network price for anesthesia, too.

THE HEADACHE: Your insurer denies you coverage after a procedure.

WHO CAN HELP: Your doctor.

THE SOLUTION: Every insurer offers an appeals process that essentially amounts to arguing your case against the reasons for denial. You want to gather as much evidence as you can for why your care was necessary—think authoritative sources like medical journals and, most important, a thorough explanation in writing from your doctor of why your situation called for the procedure.

YOU DON'T HAVE THE MONEY

***3 MILLION:** Number of Americans who owe more than $10K in medical debt.*

THE HEADACHE: You opted to pay for a procedure out of pocket—but it turned out to cost way more than you were told.

WHO CAN HELP: A government arbitrator.

THE SOLUTION: Under the No Surprises Act, which took effect at the beginning of 2022, if you pay out of pocket for a service, you should be given a good-faith estimate of its cost in advance. If the bill comes in more than $400 above that estimate, you can submit a claim to the U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (see how at cms.gov/nosurprises/consumers), and an arbitrator will determine what's fair.

THE HEADACHE: The bill is correct but more than you can afford right now.

WHO CAN HELP: The hospital billing department.

THE SOLUTION: You've got options depending on how out of reach the expenses are. Some hospitals offer a "prompt pay" discount: If you can put the whole thing on your credit card on the spot, they might knock off up to 10 percent. And if you have a deeper need, most hospitals offer payment plans or financial aid for patients under a certain income threshold. Application details should be on its website.

IT'S THE PRINCIPLE OF THE THING

THE PROBLEM: You've been wronged, plain and simple. Remember the story of how one person paid $199 for a Covid test out of pocket and his friend used insurance at the same place and got a bill for $6,408? Like that.

WHO CAN HELP: The media.

THE SOLUTION: Show proof you have unjust, sky-high bills to a journalist. If the story breaks big, your provider will be under major pressure to relent, or a sympathetic public could help with something like a GoFundMe campaign. "That seems to have by far the best track record at getting people's bills to disappear, if you've got a story good enough that someone might cover it," says health-care economist Loren Adler.

FAST TIMES

In case you don't know **DANIEL RICCIARDO**—F1's most charismatic driver since Andretti—let us bring you up to speed.

BY JOSHUA ST. CLAIR

WINNING A PODIUM in Formula 1—that's finishing first, second, or third—is a big deal. Big enough that Australian driver Daniel Ricciardo thought podium winners should, you know, actually celebrate. So in 2016, Ricciardo poured his winning Champagne into his sweaty Puma racing boot and drank, a stunt now called a "shoey." He's done one nearly every podium.

No shoeys yet for Ricciardo this season, which is all the more reason to stay loose and have fun. "I've only just started wearing my own clothes at the track," says the standout from Netflix's *Formula 1: Drive to Survive*. He wants to bring more life to the paddock now, too. "Every now and then, I'll rock up with a party shirt." Not a Hawaiian Dad Shirt. Something fun. Maybe with unicorns.

When he's not racing, Ricciardo wants to keep his style fast and simple. "Black jeans," he says of his go-to outfit, starting from the bottom. Then: "A vintage music T-shirt. I've got this vintage Pantera T-shirt, which I love. It's just got the sickest rips in it. And it's also got a big number three on the back." (That's his racing number.) He'll complete the look with a few rings, a necklace, and a watch. Ricciardo says his style combines elements of action sports, punk rock, and skateboarding. That means skinny jeans (he likes Amiri these days) and oversize shirts.

Sneakers? Those have to be Vans or Rhudes, Ricciardo says. Pumas and Nikes are only for when you win, when you need a glass for the Champagne. ■





CONQUER THE WATER

These **Polo Ralph Lauren** utility pants are made of heavy-duty, quick-drying canvas, so you can wear them just about anywhere. Cliff diving, clam digging, motoring around the inlet—they're durable as all get-out and look way cooler than waders.

Life vest ($128) and RXP-X Apex 300 personal watercraft by **Sea-Doo;** Polo Sport pants ($125) by **Polo Ralph Lauren.**

KEEP IT COOL

Sweatshirts during shoulder seasons are a tough call. Go with a crewneck to prevent overheating. This one from **Outerknown** leverages a hemp-cotton blend that lets you breathe, is wrinkle resistant for when you're on the move, and takes up way less room in your suitcase than a bulky hoodie does.

Sweatshirt ($98) by **Outerknown;** Trialmaster pants ($275) by **Belstaff.**



FIND YOUR FOOTING

Wear-everywhere sneakers are as light as they are durable, purpose-built for weekend hikes, terminal-to-terminal slogs, and urban exploration. This **Skechers** pick reinforces its outsole with Goodyear rubber (yeah, like Goodyear *tires*), and **Salomon**'s grippy hiking lace-ups have an ultra-breathable mesh upper. And both the **EA7 Emporio Armani** and the **Sorel Breakthru** sneakers are easy to slip on and tie up in a rush.

From top: Crusher Distance sneakers ($195) by **EA7 Emporio Armani;** Kinetic Breakthru Tech Lace sneakers ($130) by **Sorel x Alfred;** sneakers ($110) by **Mark Nason x Skechers;** sneakers ($230) by **Salomon Sportstyle.**

MAKE EVERY SECOND COUNT

New watches mix racing and diving elements, enhancing their basic functionality. The **Omega Seamaster** sustains dives of 20,000 feet (or the pool's deep end). The **Tudor Black Bay Pro,** the **TAG Heuer Formula 1,** and the **Seiko Chronograph** can measure split-second race times (or TGIF countdowns). And the **IWC Pilot's Watch**'s titanium case with its EasX-change system allows you to switch out the strap in seconds.

Clockwise from top right: Essentials watch ($285) by **Seiko;** Black Bay Pro watch ($3,675) by **Tudor;** Seamaster Ultra Deep Planet Ocean watch ($12,300) by **Omega;** Formula 1 watch ($1,550) by **TAG Heuer;** Pilot's Edition Mercedes-AMG Petronas Formula One Team chronograph ($7,850) by **IWC.**



FALL 2022 Men's Health GUIDE TO STYLE

Styling: Ted Stafford. Grooming: Evette Villanueva/ENV Makeup. Prop styling: Jojo Li/Hello Artists.

FIND A SHIRT THAT WORKS

Utility shirts—sturdy button-ups made from heavy cotton twill—resist wrinkles and are a must-pack, especially one from **Polo Ralph Lauren.** Its line of shirts enlivens things with a color-blocked design and ramps up the comfort factor with brushed cotton, an airy spin on the classic fabric.

Polo Sport shirt ($168) and Polo Sport pants ($125) by **Polo Ralph Lauren;** tank ($28) by **Mack Weldon.**

FALL 2022 Men's Health GUIDE TO STYLE

MADE TO MOVE

LIFE IN THE FAST LANE calls for clothes that can keep up. Welcome a new fleet of multi-functional, lightweight, and totally cool style gear that can go the distance. To road-test all this amazing stuff, we brought in Formula 1 speed demon **DANIEL RICCIARDO.** Lights out and away we go.

Chambray shirt ($190) by **Officine Générale;** pants ($275) by **Belstaff.**



PHOTOGRAPHS BY **TYLER JOE**
STILL-LIFE PHOTOGRAPHS BY **JEFFREY WESTBROOK**

LIGHTEN YOUR BAGGAGE

For peak travel nimbleness, you need a light, spacious bag. These three from **Rains, Tumi,** and **Shinola** are built with lightweight and water-resistant fabrics, easy-to-access openings, and a slick design for airport dashes and city treks.

From left: Backpack ($155) by **Rains;** sling bag ($550) by **Tumi x McLaren;** duffel bag ($650) by **Shinola.**

More adrenaline per second

Push the limits of performance like a Formula 1 driver with the new Sea-Doo RXP-X Apex 300. It's the race-inspired thrill ride you and Daniel Ricciardo have been waiting for.



LIVE THE SEA-DOO LIFE

Learn more at sea-doo.com

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Men's Health

FALL 2022

GUIDE TO STYLE

STARRING

FORMULA 1'S COOLEST DRIVER DANIEL RICCIARDO

+BEST COMMUTER BAGS

+NEW SPORTS WATCHES

+HYBRID SNEAKERS

AND MUCH MORE!